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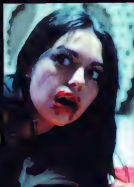


INTERVIEW

WITH

JESS
FRANCO

by Kevin Collins



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European Trash Cinema

SPECIAL #1

**Editor,
Publisher, Designer
CRAIG LEDBETTER**

**Co-Editors
Kelli Coughlan
Kevin Collins**

**Cover Design
Tim & Donna Lucas**

**Special Thanks
Kevin Collins
Jesus Franco
Tim Lucas
Lina Romay**

Front Cover

*Jesus Franco IS the Sadist Of Notre Dame
as his numerous co-stars from the past look
on.*

Back Cover

*Beautiful poster artwork for Franco's THE
KILLER BARBYS!*

E-MAIL ADDRESS

74563.1756@COMPUSERVE.COM
PHONE/FAX 713-251-0637

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RANT

Welcome to the very first Special Edition of European Trash Cinema. What better way to start a new series of ETC than with one of the Kings of the genre, Jesus Franco. My idea behind these one shots (or special editions--Jeez, where have we heard these names before? So much for originality!) was to spotlight or focus the magazine's gaze on a specific person or type of film. I had originally planned on covering the career of Riccardo Freda (this will still happen, it has been pushed back to ETC Special #2) first, but when Kevin Collins plopped a four and a half hour interview with Jess Franco in my lap, well I ain't stupid!

With Franco scheduled to appear at the Chiller Convention this year, the timing seemed to be too good to pass up. So, here it is, the longest interview with Jesus Franco to ever appear in English. Kevin Collins did an excellent job getting the man to reveal his thoughts and ideas on everything from Orson Welles to Terence Fisher to American porn actresses! I would also like to thank Kevin's editor Kelli Coughlan for copy editing this manuscript in record time and under huge time constraints. If there are any errors in this edition, they are my sole responsibility.

OK, enough of my blabbering, you have a world class interview to digest. Enjoy!

INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVIEW

WITH JESS FRANCO

by Kevin Collins

If, coupled with Craig Ledbetter's, you happened to notice my name on the cover of this special issue of "European Trash Cinema", you probably greeted it with an inquisitive "who?" or a resounding yawn.

I am the lesser half of 1-Shot Publications and you are undoubtedly much more familiar with my fabulous partner Tim Greaves. Tim and - to a much lesser extent - I have strung together a series of well-received booklets extolling the beauty and talents of various actresses made popular during the cinematic reign of the "Hammer Horrors". After the 1995 release of our "Ingrid Pitt: Queen of Horror" we looked around for new areas of interest onto which the 1-Shot spotlight could expand. My long years of begging and cajoling finally paid dividends in spades when Tim announced that 1-Shot's sole 1996 issue would be a tribute to my all-time favorite genre actress - Lina Romay.

The interview you are about to read is a direct residue of my assignment on the Romay booklet. In order to correct or corroborate many of the claims perpetrated in print for years about Lina's career, I was slated to garner an exclusive interview with the former Rosa Maria Almirall. It was very easy to scribble down a collection of questions - there was so much about Lina that I was dying to learn - but the problem laid in actually finding the lady. The key, of course, was to first find Jess Franco: Lina would not be far away.

And so my search for Jess and Lina began just after the New Year. With no idea where to begin, I dashed off letters to a string of magazine and fanzine editors. Only one helpful response was received - Tim and Donna Lucas of "Video Watchdog" directed me towards Peter Blumenstock in Germany of "Obsession: The Films of Jess Franco" fame.

Peter, in turn, set me up for a telephone call to Alain Petit in France who consequently paved the way for telephone conversations with Howard Vernon, Jack Taylor, and Antonio Mayans. Alain provided me with some general re-

cent whereabouts on my targets. However, generalities were not about to help me while I was sifting halfway around the world with an empty notebook in front of me. Only the ever-reliable Mayans was at last able to make the final connections for me.

After a few false starts - namely a couple of telephone calls to Antonio's home in which my absence of talent in the Spanish tongue nearly put a premature kibosh on the entire project - I was able to reach the frequent male lead of Franco's films whose fluent English put things solidly back

on track. Antonio knew exactly where his star director was at the moment. And, as a soothing balm to my worried ears, I was elated to learn that Jess was actually in the middle of shooting a new horror film at the time and that Lina was at his side. What we couldn't actually determine was precisely just what film he was shooting and just when Lina would be available to meet with me for an interview but Antonio promised to help.

With my message in Antonio's hands, days of waiting turned nervously into weeks of worrying. I had to be ready

to fly to Spain - or wherever - on what would be a moment's notice in the event that we could arrange an interview. Given the allegedly elusive nature of Franco and Romay, I worried that I might wind up locating them and yet not be able to reach them in time before they moved on to their next project or into thin air.

An odd network of telephone calls, faxes, and hand-delivered notes was tenuously set up between me, Antonio and Jess, with Jess holding up his end of the chain from the set of his film somewhere deep in the "forests" of Valencia. Finally, on February 3rd, the telephone rang at my home at about 5:30 in the morning. Unable to immediately shake the sleep from my eyes, I perched at the top of my stairs listening for my trusty answering machine to screen this early morning tele-intruder. Sudden alertness matched the speed of my steps as I raced to the phone upon hearing, "Hello, this is Jess Franco calling from Spain..."





Hugh Gallagher, Lina Romay, Kevin Collins, Jess Franco (l-r) at Jess and Lina's apartment. March 3, 1995

Although that particular call was prematurely disconnected by some trans-Atlantic phone gremlin, a solid and trusted relationship was fostered in the few minutes of its duration. Jess welcomed me to visit with him and Lina in Madrid as they would begin editing their new movie there two weeks on.

Now the mad rush was on to find a travel and recording companion. Logically I knew there was no way I could handle the interview and its recording alone. My partner, Tim, was unable to travel at that time and the brevity of the forewarning nixed out both my One Shot photographer and my One Shot editor.

When the dust finally cleared, the crack One Shot Productions team lined up as such: me, Hugh Gallagher from Dracula Publications, and actress/authoress Jewel Shepard.

Hugh and I had known each other on and off over the past couple of years from various transactions between his publishing house and either One Shot or I-Shot. We'd met a few times at conventions and despite appearances of the cornerstone magazine in his fleet - he is actually a pretty normal fellow. And he is a talented writer, publisher, and nice guy to boot. His role would be to photograph, video tape, and record the interview and anything else of interest.

Talented and beautiful, Jewel Shepard would be a welcome addition to anybody's traveling team. Jewel planned on covering the trip from its conception on through to its end (whether bitter or successful) for "Premiere" magazine - to which she is a regular contributor. Adding to her attractive resume, Jewel told us that she had lived in Spain for nearly

a full year in the early eighties, thus giving us a chance to survive in a foreign land with our blatant American expectations. Most interestingly, Jess appeared interested in meeting the curvaceous star of **CAGED HEAT 2: STRIPPED OF FREEDOM**.

Unfortunately, a day or two before takeoff, Jewel's plans went awry thanks to Tammy Faye Baker and Jm. J. Bullock. Is any explanation necessary beyond the mention of those two names? I think not. And so it was off to Madrid alone for me and Hugh.

Getting to Spain wasn't nearly as difficult as getting through J.F.K. Airport for us. This was Hugh's first international trip and he was relying on me - the "seasoned" traveler with some Europe time under my belt for guidance and confidence. How much of that confidence would you imagine was shaken when I noticed, at check-in! - that I left my passport at home? Luckily our flight wound up delayed for over four hours so I had ample time in which to retrieve it.

Thanks to one of those infamous tailwinds, we touched down in Barajas unbloodied and unbruised only about three hours behind our original schedule. We picked up our rental car and made the twenty minute trip from the airport to our hotel in two hours flat. Our keen senses of observation allowed us to notice after driving only five minutes that traffic in Spain moves on the right-hand side of the road and not on the left as we had been warned by our absent trip-mother (who shall remain nameless but whose initials are "Jewel Shepard").

Upon arriving at the surprisingly nice *Apartamentos Muralto* we were greeted with a handwritten message from Jess and Lina inviting us to meet or call them at their editing studio. Since we were late we decided to call.

Armed with an empty hand - which was supposed to be holding the mammoth Spanish/English dictionary which I had purchased just for this trip but which was still sitting on my couch at home - I attempted to place a call to the studio to find our quarry. The secretary at *Estudios Exa* was not impressed with my v-e-r-y s-l-o-w English spoken with a Spanish accent but somehow she discerned that I was trying to reach Jess Franco. Flushed with embarrassment, I waited on dead air for about five minutes before a very familiar female voice appeared on the other end of the line: Lina Romay! She told me that she and Jess were just about to finish up for the day and that they would call upon us at the hotel later in the day.

Unfortunately, the long flight coupled with his first sampling of international airline food had left Hugh and his mid-American tummy a tad upset. As he conked out across his bed, I trekked through the neighborhood in hopes of finding a pharmacy and something to ease his bellyache. What I hadn't counted on was that the whole city had shut



Lina does not suffer fools lightly. Here she puts up with Kevin Collins during the exclusive interview for "The Lina Romay File".

down between 2:00PM and 5:00PM for siesta-time! As I wandered up and down nameless streets being greeted by metal gates and locked doors, I suddenly turned a corner and nearly knocked over a couple of innocent Spaniards. To my amazement - and at such astronomical odds that it couldn't have been simply a coincidence - it was Jess and Lina coming home from their day at the editing studio!

The balance of that evening was taken up with an entertaining and educational walking tour of Madrid with Jess and Lina as our guides. We talked endlessly about their films, movies in general, the history of Spain, and whatever else flowed through our collective streams of consciousness. In short, it was one of the most remarkable evenings of my life.

The balance of our trip was taken up with long chats over breakfasts, lunches, and dinners and visits to the editing studios to watch the progression of Jess' latest opus, **KILLER BARBYS**. We met and spent time with Antonio Mayans and tried to pound out a few business deals which may eventually lead to the American video releases of countless as-yet-unseen Franco-films. We even got to watch Jess argue with one of his producers about the shoddy transfer to video given the spectacular trailer Lina edited together for **KILLER BARBYS**.

After shouting down and finally getting his way with the stuffed-shirt over at Canal+, Jess took Hugh and me along to the video studio to watch the very interesting and entertaining color- and brightness-enhancing transfer process as Jess supervised a new edition of the trailer.

And, topping it all off for me, Jess actually asked for and accepted my opinion on the title of the film. Although the rock band for which the film is named after is called *The Killer Barbies*, Jess didn't want to tempt fate or taunt the powers-that-be over at Mattel Toys so he decided to retile the film with a phonetical equivalent of the word "Barbies."

The tongue-defying title which had already been burnt onto the screen was **KILLER BARBYS**. When I told Jess that har-byes sounded neither like "Barbies" nor anything else, he asked me how I would spell it. My suggestion - and the title which was immediately emblazoned upon the screen was the current, and soon to be famous, **KILLER BARBYS**. Do I earn any bragging rights for this?

Both Jess and Lina were wonderful raconteurs and frequently regaled us with tales from their past. I have to confess that since my trip was primarily planned to wrest an exclusive interview with Lina, I was totally unprepared to sit down and interview Jess. The following four-hour (!) chatfest was prepared with only a few pages of scribbled notes. So please don't be disappointed if I allowed Jess to wrangle out of a few tight spots without deeper explanations or if some questionable "facts" went unquestioned. I did my best to touch upon as much of his nearly 40-year long career and 150-plus films as possible. The results may best be described as superficial but they do make up the most extensive and exhaustive English-language interview with Franco to date. And I hope to tie up all the loose ends by going one-on-one with Jess again in October when he and Lina are my guests at Kevin Clement's Chiller Theatre Expo from October 25th through 27th.

So please be as forgiving as possible as you read the following pages. And before I turn things over to the recorded words allow me to pass around some well-deserved thanks. Naturally, none of this would ever have come about without the naissance of the idea of a Lina Romay booklet from my dear friend and partner Tim Greaves. Without the able assistance of Hugh Gallagher I never would have made it to and through Spain. Jewel Shepard's intentions and suggestions went a long way towards making this trip a success - she is truly an awesome inspiration. My friend and expert photographer, Michael Coughlan didn't tag along on the trip but he made sure in his darkroom that my clumsy shutterbugging produced the optimum results. None of the words on these pages would have made any sense without the tireless and exceptional efforts of my One Shot editor, Kelli Coughlan, who would have made Jess proud: a woman of beauty, brains, and wit. And, of course, Craig Ledbetter has provided me with an avenue down which to send these words - thus allowing you to read them. Thanks, Craig.

And I would not be so callous as to forget the people on the other side of the Atlantic. Peter Blumentstock, Alain Petit, and Antonio Mayans share equal superlatives for their help in bringing this and our 1-Shot project - "The Lina Romay File: Intimate Confessions of an Exhibitionist" - together.

Lastly, and certainly not least, I must extend my humble and gracious thanks to both Jess and Lina for their kindness and generosity. Not only were they "hosts with the most", they have become wonderful friends. Long may they wave.

Interview with JESS FRANCO



*Recorded March 3, 1996
Madrid, Spain*

Interviewed by: Kevin Collins
Recorded by: Hugh Gallagher (Draculina Publishing)
Edited by: Kelli Coughlan

SPEAKER KEY:

JF - JESS FRANCO
KC - KEVIN COLLINS
LR - LINA ROMAY
HG - HUGH GALLAGHER

KC - Your life as a director has been almost 40 years long. How do you assess your career at this point?

JF - I think I am quite happy about my career. It's a strange career. I was always an independent - an outsider, if you prefer. But I can tell you something: maybe I didn't always have enough money to make the films properly, but I always chose my subjects. I always made the films in the way I wanted. And when people started to press me to do things the way they wanted, I didn't do it. So I know my career has got its moments of success - not here in Spain where I was never successful - but, for instance, at one time I had four or five films running at once in Germany, France, Italy and even in England and the United States. And this is good enough for me, you know. And truthfully, as long as I can continue making pictures the way I like ... it's okay.

KC - Has making movies - or the business of making movies - been everything you've expected it to be?

JF - Commercially or artistically?

KC - Well, you've always chosen what you've done, but have you always been able to do everything you've wanted?

JF - No, never, never, never. I never made a film with a budget allowing me to retake a lot of things or to finish the post-production in the way I wanted. These are 'B' or even 'C' films, so I know very clearly how things are done. But besides me, lots of people have to be servants to producers. Producers who many times don't know what I want or other times they know what I want but they think what I want is unbelievable! [laughs] So I had the chance, at least, to make the things I wanted to. Not in a perfect way, of course. I would like one day - and I don't know if it will arrive for me - to make one of those films that I like to do with a good budget, you know? Because I suppose I could do very nice things.

KC - When did you first decide that you wanted to make movies?

JF - I was eight. I was in school and I escaped from the school to go to the cinema. But I didn't go to the cinema to see "Popeye" or something like that, no, no. I went to see Raoul Walsh films. My brother was two years younger than me and when I was ten and he was eight we made a list of the directors we loved. And we wanted to go to see all of the films by them that we could. And, by chance, all of them were American directors and American films. Because in Europe there's a mistaken belief that a film is a way to talk about politics or social problems or philosophy - and I don't think so. I think a film is a complete thing and when a film ends I think it is important enough, you know, to be just a show. Like a circus or a nightclub. But I don't feel (cinema) is so important that it has to be representative of, or the master of, the deep culture of our age. A film is a distraction, it's a show. It has to be nice to take the people away from their own problems and not to put them in the middle of new problems.

KC - It should only be an escape...

JF - Yeah, I think so.

KC - You made the decision to make films at the age of eight, so when did you first get the opportunity to work on a film?

JF - You know, I was in the School of Cinema in Madrid at the time, in the times of terrible censorship in Spain. I realized I could not be a movie director without knowing a lot of important films made in the whole world, films that were forbidden in Spain. So I decided to go to France - to Paris. I knew about the French *cinematheque* and I saw the programs showing three or four films per day - very interesting, most of them. And most of them I hadn't seen. So I went there with enough money to stay a couple of weeks and I wound up staying three-and-a-half years! I started working there - not in the movies - at that time I was a trumpet player, a jazz trumpet player. So I played the trumpet or I'd do anything I could because I wanted to stay there until I had enough information. I wanted a tutorial about the history of cinema because it was impossible in Spain at that time to have that information. And then I had a friend who was staying in the school, Juan Antonio Bardem, a director who made four or five films - really very, very good films. The first film he made was in collaboration with another director - a very young director at that time - Berlanga, the man who was, I think, the best director in Spain. So Bardem makes his first film and since we were friends - well, we had a lot of common friends - I asked him through someone if I would be able to work with him if I was to come back to Spain. And he accepted. So I was in Paris one day and I got a telegram saying, "It's okay, you can come because we're going to start shooting..." I was engaged as a third assistant or something like that. I took my train and I came back and it was my first work.

KC - You brought a lot of life experience with you when you went to work in the cinema. Besides seeing many movies you were also well-read as a child and as a young man.

JF - Yes, you know it's very strange because I don't know why I was always involved in the American culture. My favorite writers are at that time - and I still read them - were Hemingway and John Steinbeck and William Faulkner.

KC - You mean back when America had a culture...

JF - [chuckles] Yeah. And William Saroyan was very good. I loved William Saroyan. And also some Spanish writers, Federico Garcia Lorca and people like that. People of the "Generation of 98" - we called them "The Generation of 98" - very good writers like Machado, Garcia Lorca, and Valle Inclan. I knew them very well but I was a stranger to their ideas; I liked them only as a show, to look at them from afar but not to get involved in them. When I started, for instance, one of the first things I made in the business - in the theater at the university - was Elmer Rice, a stage edition of Elmer Rice. So I made three short adaptations of



MARQUIS DE SADE:
Justine

the stories of William Saroyan on the stage. It was a series of novels, small novels of Saroyan called "As a Knife, As a Flower, As Absolutely Nothing in the World." It's a wonderful thing. I made this adaptation and it was very successful. I don't know why I preferred American writers, maybe it was because the cinema I preferred was the American. You know I still love, for instance, more than any other films in the world, the Howard Hawks, John Ford, or Raoul Walsh films - all those classical geniuses. It's a series of geniuses in that period of the United States. So that's why everything came normally as a result of my preferences.

KC - One writer who had an obvious impact upon your film career was the Marquis de Sade. In fact, you've filmed one of his stories, your "Eugenie" saga, at least four different times.

JF - Yeah.

KC - How old were you when you began to read the works of de Sade?

JF - When I was in Paris.

KC - So you would have been a teenager at the time?

JF - Yeah. Yes, in the middle of my teens.

KC - What is it about his work that holds a fascination for you?

JF - You know, it's something about his private life, I think. Because de Sade was always in jail. His mother-in-law always had

him sentenced to jail. Every four or five years she went out - she! - and created a new scandal to put him in jail again. He was a man - a madman - who was completely innocent. He never did the things he wrote. They were like dreams, like nightmares maybe. But he was completely out of the classification of the French or the European literature of this time.

KC - He was a genre unto himself.

JF - Yes! And I like this position. He was put in jail, but every time he went in he kept on thinking the same way and writing the same things, over and over.

KC - His "Philosophy in the Boudoir" - you filmed that beginning in 1969 as *DE SADE 70*. And then *PLAISIR A TROIS* is allegedly based upon it, *COCKTAIL SPECIAL*, and *EUGENIE-L'HISTOIRE DE UNA PERVERSION*. You frequently refilm the same stories over and over - perhaps leading to what we had discussed once before about how people erroneously think that your whole filmography is just one story told time and time again...

JF - [laughs] Yeah, right!

KC - ... But there are a handful of stories, such as this one, that you do reshoot frequently. Do you do this just because you enjoy working with the story or do you keep doing it, in a sense, to improve it or "get it right"?

JF - Both things. To improve it, first. And then I get the impression that there are a lot more things that I can say about this story. It's a game, if you like, but every director - if he's a normal man - changes his mind every three or four years and he can find things which were completely forgotten in his previous version of a film and now he will have a new one, a new point of view. His own new point of view, so deep inside of him but still from the same man, but the way you'd take it now is completely different. I love it, I love doing this. I think it's mad, but I like it. But it's not a new thing, eh? Howard Hawks, for instance, all the westerns of Howard Hawks are the same - the same story and the same characters and the same situations; but every time it's a new film, a wonderful film.

KC - I guess it's more obvious with you because there are so many of your films around that it is easy to recognize the apparent repetition of a number of stories from time to time. If Howard Hawks does one story over and over, that's one thing, but in your case you may find five or six stories done over and over.

JF - No more than six, I think [laughs]. I have a list [winks and smiles]... okay, twelve. [laughs]

KC - In regards to de Sade's "Philosophy in the Boudoir", I don't recognize a new version of that from you since 1980. Have you done that story again since then?

JF - No.

KC - Have you stopped there because you've done it as well as you could?

JF - No, no. It's because I was stopped. I was stopped by the Spanish laws, the laws of the Common Market. I was told I couldn't do "Eugenie" again, or anything. I had to change my manners completely and had to take another path to make more - if you want to call it this way - more "important" films in order to be accepted by people who had to judge my work from the Ministry... the guys who can destroy your career with just a signature. So I had to change. I was very unhappy. Still I am very unhappy because I had projected a goal for myself to make another 100 films from the '80s to the end of the '90s - and I didn't do it, at least not yet! Since then I've made just 10 or 12 films or



Antonio Mayans and Jess Franco discuss the future of Manacoia Films at Estudios Exa. March 2, 1996.

something like that. Which for me is not enough because I have a kind of inner sense to work over and over and not to stop. It's the thing I prefer in my life: to make films. When I say it is "to make films," I know directors who like very much to shoot films but then they're not so happy to do the post-production. I love the post-production as well as the shooting period.

KC - How about the pre-production? Do you enjoy going through the whole process?

JF - Ah! Also! Wonderful, wonderful. I enjoy it all, yes. Because I used to be a manager of production before I began directing. I was a manager of production because I loved it. I had the chance to be a manager of production and it was fantastic.

KC - So it's been sixteen years since you've done your last version of "Eugenia". Can you ever envision yourself doing another one?

JF - Ah, yes. I would like that.

KC - Another aspect of your career that leads some people to mistakenly think that it has all been one long story is that you frequently reuse the same characters' names over and over again. They're not necessarily the same characters again, but their names are reused. There's a lot of Countesses. Lorna Greene shows up every once in a while, there's a lot of Radecks...

JF - [laughs] Normally it's an homage to some real people from films. Like Hal Pereira for instance. Hal Pereira was an art director from Paramount Studios, I think, and he was just wonderful. So I took the name and changed it to "Al" Pereira.

KC - Most of the other characters are usually the same name used over and over again but for some reason Al Pereira is always the same person - the detective - not just the same name. Why does Al get such special treatment?

JF - Pereira is special but, no, he's not the only one, because in general I think all my Radecks are the same - maybe with different nationalities so I can bring in different aspects. But in principal they are the same Radeck, no?

KC - Well, in principal, right.

JF - For instance, Morpho. The monster Morpho is Morpho, always Morpho. And you know why, I think, I loved it when I first read novelists like Balzac, using the same people to continue a story. You know, you leave the characters when you finish your film but they are still there, going on with their lives when the film ends. And you have to call them again from time to time to see what they are doing now.

KC - Sort of like checking up on old friends to see what's happened to them since the last film.

JF - Yes, exactly.

KC - A serial with all together different films instead of different chapters...

JF - I love that, to continue the story of them. For instance, Al Pereira is a very poor and stupid detective. He's not a brilliant man. He never has a penny. He's a disaster! But Al Pereira, deep inside, is an honest man. And I like this kind of loser which is honest - who are losers even though they are good people, you know? It's why I try to pull out Al Pereira often because it's interesting to me to find out what's happening with him, to him.

KC - You've had so many different actors playing him, Eddie Constantine, Howard Vernon, Antonio Mayans, and so on. Who's the best Al Pereira?

JF - Antonio Mayans.

KC - Even you have played Al in DOWNTOWN...

*JF - [laughs] Oh, I played him once because it was easier for me; for the production also. You know, when I play the important parts - and only twice have I played an important part - it's when I am happy about the project. One time was *LE SADIQUE DE NOTRE DAME* and the other is the one I made with Fernando Fernan Gomez - but I was only an actor, you know - Fernando directed...*

*KC - That's "The Strange Voyage", *EL EXTRANO VIAJE*...*

*JF - Yes. But, usually, when I take a part it's because I know I can play it and it's much cheaper because I don't have to pay myself. And so I play it. But, in general, I'm a little bit like Hitchcock. Longer, you know, because Hitchcock was just one shot, a cameo in every film... But to play an important part and to be the director, I don't like it. If the director is someone else, well then, yes, I love it. I love it. Once I was speaking with Orson Welles about acting and directing because I was working with him at the time as the director of the second unit of *CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT*... and then I had a contract to make the film *TREASURE ISLAND* with him playing the part of Captain Silver. He was very much preoccupied because he was co-producer of both films. With *TREASURE ISLAND* we had to stop because there was no more money to film. And I asked him, "Tell me something that we've never discussed before, Orson. For you is it as important to play some important part such as Captain Silver or King Lear and not to direct?" He told me, "It's the same!" He said, "You can create things as an actor just as well as you can do it as a director." Which is very much an American point of view. Very few people in Europe think like that. But I agree one hundred percent.*

*KC - Say, in *LE SADIQUE DE NOTRE DAME*, did you do your direction from the set while you were acting or did you run through everything first with the actors and technicians as the director and then step onto the set into character?*

JF - No, for me it was a film that I worked on for one week. And then, let's say three months later, we shot again for three days - something like that. I wrote the story so, for me, the character of

the Sadique - the Sadist - was more important than the direction, much more important.

KC - What is it about that film that makes it so important for you?

JF - Because it was a liberation for me to make that. In a sense that my own story is that I am always going and coming back and going and coming back. Each coming back means a kind of deception when I come back to Spain. Because the promise I believe might be in Spain is never here. And then I move again because I find more possibilities outside of Spain for me. And so, frustrated by Spain, I get the desire to ... pow! ... explode and to make something strong and LE SADIQUE DE NOTRE DAME was one of those cases.

KC - Let me see if I understand... instead of the frustrated and defrocked priest who returns to Notre Dame and is disappointed by all the supposed sex and debauchery and then takes out his frustrations, you look at yourself as the director "exiled" from Spain due to the lack of opportunities and is always frustrated when you return because the opportunities still aren't here.

JF - Yes, that's right.

KC - See, where I lose that comparison is that we - the audience - don't look at the Sadist - el Sadique - as a hero of any type. Do you feel the same way about yourself, that we shouldn't look upon you as a hero?

JF - Oh, no. Of course not.

KC - Why not?

JF - Because heroes for me are okay to write about but I don't really believe in heroes. I believe in real people, sincere people, normal people.

KC - Getting back to the subject of characters' names... you said that Antonio Mayans was the best Al Pereira. In LES FRISONS SUR LA PEAU, or LE CHEMIN SOLITAIRE, you gave Antonio's character the name of Richard Scary. Is there any relationship to this name and that of Richard Scarry, the author?

JF - Yes, yes, the same.

KC - You were aware of the author?

JF - Yes.

KC - [after a long pause] Okay, that's what intrigues me about your films. There are so many levels and ways to explore them. Even down to the characters' names. Do you agree that some of your films can be so deeply layered - at the expense of narrative sometimes - that it almost makes them impenetrable, if not impossible to understand, for the first-time or relatively new viewer? You said earlier that a movie is just something to go into, to sit down, to watch, and hopefully enjoy, and that's it, it's over. And yet your films are sometimes so intricately put together that a novice viewer can't appreciate it, let alone enjoy it. You sometimes have to watch the same films five or six times to fully understand - and sometimes not fully - and appreciate them.

JF - Oh, yeah. This is a problem with my personality. You know I was very good friends with Nicholas Ray. In an interview with him someone asked "Why don't you make films more involved with social problems?" He said, "I always make films involved with social problems. It is impossible for a director to tell a story without portraying the things happening around him even if his story is set in the time of Jesus Christ." You know, to explain the characters in a story you have to also show the ambience and the life around them. And it always happens to me even if I don't want it to - it will always be the same. I will have a storyline but

I can't forget the things happening around the story and the characters, you know? Many times I make a point about something that is out of the story - but it's there - because I don't believe in a straight storyline like that [draws a line across the table] with no variations. Because if you make a tragedy - or even if you live a tragedy - suddenly some funny things happen around the tragedy, of course. Otherwise it would be too straight a story; and if you had to live such a life you would kill yourself. Because even in the most difficult or most dangerous situations there is something nice, or funny, or lovely happening around you. And I know sometimes I go too far looking for such things around my characters or my story. But I do it in a very sincere way. I try to show in the very best way what is happening.

KC - You know that sometimes you have gone too far. But do you realize when you're going too far? Do you realize it when you're doing it?

JF - [laughs] Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes... well, not always... but lots of times, yes, [blushes] I made a film - a very mad film - called "Pop Street Blues"...

KC - LOS BLUES DE CALLE POP, right?

JF - Yes. I knew this "Pop Street Blues" was completely mad. But I made it because I had a need to show various things. For instance there is a place in Spain which is kind of a set, an enormous set, called Benidorm. You know it?

KC - That's where you and Lina also shot LAS CHICAS DEL TANGA?

JF - Right. Benidorm was kind of a fishing village thirty years ago when I went there for the first time. And now it's an enormous town with buildings with forty flats and things like that. But very badly done! Very nasty architects, awful colors...

KC - Which you bring out in "Pop Street Blues". That's what I like about that film, the wild colors rampant through some scenes. Some scenes are almost completely yellow or all red.

JF - Yeah, and so I decided to make a story, let's say a little bit like Raymond Chandler crossed with Madama, but set in that town, you know, in the confusion of that town. Because it's not a real town, it's a set. It's an unbelievable place. Nobody was born there but in summertime there are four-hundred thousand people there - which is a lot. But no one is from there! [laughs] It's mysterious. And so I wanted to put my story in the middle of this madness and I know I was being completely mad. Because I am also using very funny names for the people and the places are called funny names.

KC - Many characters in that film are named after cigarettes.

JF - Yes!

KC - Was that from your fondness for cigarettes?

JF - No. I was a smoker since I was fourteen years old. I am still alive. I was never really ill in my life. Never sick. Never. Okay, just once before I started smoking. I was eight or nine years old and I had an operation to remove my... how do you call them? [makes gestures around his throat] amígdalas?

KC - Tonsils.

JF - Yeah, they don't know why they are there but they cut them out because sometimes I could get a fever or something like that. And from that moment on I was never in my life sick in bed for even one day.

KC - Amazing, maybe you know the secret.

JF - Well, why would I change? Why should I? Maybe if I stopped smoking tomorrow I would be sick within three days. Because all of my organisms are built around the smoke! [wry smile] Maybe.

KC - Yeah, maybe. Don't look too hard, you might not want to find out an answer to that question.

JF - I'll touch wood! [laughs and knocks on the table]

KC - Good luck. [laughs] Sometimes you know when you are going too far and there are critics who will say that your films don't have much social value ...

JF - I know. I never tried to have a social value, not even in the first grade. Never!

KC - Do you understand why some critics have difficulty with your films?

JF - Yes! I understand it. And they are probably right! No, I'm not against when critics say, "Oh, Franco! Another Franco film! ... and all of that. I understand it. Because I made so many films and, in principle, I think that most critics want to be a director. It's true, no?"

KC - The saying goes, "Those who can't do, criticize." Doesn't it?

JF - My God, that's so true. I made more than 150 films so they look at me stupidly and jealously and then look for things to be done badly. [snickers] And then they find them.

KC - Are you proud of the fact that there is something now to which people refer as a "Franco film"?

JF - I think there's a part of myself in all of my films, in all 150 of them. I don't know if this part of me is strong enough to recognize, my style. But I think, for someone who knows a little bit (about) my movies, they can recognize if it's my film or not. With the exception of about three or four films about which I am quite unhappy - that I made with producers who wanted to do just that, that, and that. Only what they wanted.

KC - I was going to say, it's easy to tell when the director had the final say on a film as opposed to when you were able to do as you pleased.

JF - Oh, yes, I prefer films of mine which are cheaper, more free, and made without any money - but I was free. You know, when I made *NECRONOMICON*, for instance, *NECRONOMICON* was an independent film. Completely, yes! I made it with a friend of mine who was a manager of production, a German manager of production. He liked the story very much. He said, "We're going to build this up." He worked at it and he got enough money to do it - and that was quite difficult. But my mind was clear and free to do it the way I wanted. So this, for me, is the best.

KC - When you're left on your own, do you think you have only one style or a number of different styles?

JF - [laughs]

KC - Well, you know, you have so many different kinds of films and yet you can always spot a "Franco film". Does each kind of film have its own inherent "Franco" style or is there one style that is identifiable in every "Franco film"?

JF - I will answer you with an example. Howard Hawks made three different films in his life: one was black cinema [film noir - ed.], one was the funny American comedy, and one was the western. Mainly. He made *HATARI!* or films like that which were

exceptions but mainly he was with those three films. Those three films usually had the same story for each one and you could recognize the print of Howard Hawks. Now, I'm not Howard Hawks but I think I've got some personality which is recognizable in the different kinds of my films.

KC - What is it that you believe is recognizable?

JF - Listen, I think it's the contrast of terrible things happening and a certain sense of humor - a certain "friendly eye" towards almost everybody. I don't hate people, even the most awful monster! [laughs]

KC - Usually there is nobody completely bad - or without humor - in your films. Even the people who commit evil are usually compelled from without rather than from within.

JF - There's nobody completely bad. And I think this is not very frequent in the 'B' cinema, mostly.

KC - In search of a common thread - and you and I have discussed this over the past day or so - Tim Lucas once said, "You can't see one Franco film until you've seen them all." Do you agree with this? Because, to a large extent - figuratively - I do.

JF - Yeah, I agree with Tim Lucas. I like the thing he said because I think it means what I told you before, that your points of view are changing but you also see the development of a group of people who are my personages. If you see all of my films one by one you'll know them. It's a pity, now with the t.v. and mostly with video - I think, in time, it will be very clear - that when Dostoyevsky or Pushkin or someone wanted to make a book two-thousand pages long, they could do it. But on film normally you have between one-and-a-half and two hours to explain a story and to try to explain some characters. So you have no time to really do it seriously. You have to choose just two or three traits, maximum, to get the complexity of the people. But all the rest have to be just one line, or one thing. You know: "the man smoking" or "the man dressed in black."

KC - Yes, everybody has to come in, make their impact, and then move on.

JF - Right! So I think through my films you arrive to understand not only the guys who were the main characters on one film but also the other little guys who become the main characters in another film or a couple of other films. You know what I mean?

KC - Sure.

JF - So this is why I think Tim Lucas is quite right in his assessment. It's just one part of Jess Franco's... not "life" because my life is very normal... but maybe Jess Franco's "dark side": developing people so it can all be a continuation one way or the other.

KC - Do you understand, then, when someone can come and watch one of your films for the first time and have completely no idea of what's going on?

JF - Oh, yes. Of course I know that. But, so what? I don't think that you have to understand the films. I don't think that you have to understand the story.

KC - Which comes to the next logical point, do you think it's fair for a director to demand - or at least expect - that the audience be intelligent enough or to have some prior knowledge?

JF - No, you don't have to ask anything of the people. The cinema is entertainment. And entertainment means you have to show something nice to look at. Something nice or something awful! You know, something taking the people out of their own problems, maybe they are feeling unhappy or very much unhappy about

their marriage or Jack the Ripper, or something, you know? But when they get out (of the theater) when the film ends, they've had a short time of liberation from their problems. So I don't think it's necessary to understand. Listen, Raymond Chandler said that nobody can understand the films about him, not even himself. That doesn't mean the films are bad; I think they're wonderful. But, for instance, **THE MALTESE FALCON** - nobody can understand this film. Can you? No. Impossible! And so what? The film is great. It's beautiful. Another example is **THE KILLERS**, the Robert Siodmak film - a great director with a wonderful script. It's so difficult to understand that if you look around when you are in the theater [turns as if to look at someone over his shoulder], "Hey, nice girl!"... and then turn to look again at the screen, you can't understand the film. Okay, I saw this film a lot of times because I love it. I have it here [points to his tiny video collection]. I don't move from one town to another without bringing **THE KILLERS** with me. So I saw the film in Madrid in a small theater. And they made a mistake, they changed the order of the reels! And, with that, the film is one-hundred percent impossible for anybody in the world to understand! And at the end, now I know the film before and I said, "Oh, my God, they made it unable to be understood!" - I was waiting for the audience to exit and they are saying, "It's fantastic!" and "Oh, God, it's so beautiful!" and "Burt Lancaster is great!" That was the commentary. And nobody said, "What the hell was going on here? What happened?" And I knew nobody could understand it. [laughs] But they loved it because it's beautiful, the music and everything. And such a spirit, such a force, such an energy! And the two main characters, and the others around them - like Edmund O'Brien were great! And so the audience was fascinated looking at it. So what if they didn't understand it?

KC - So all the audience has to do is come in and be attracted to the film and then hopefully be entertained by it. They don't need to bring anything in with them nor necessarily take anything away with them?

JF - Of course.

KC - If cinema at its least should be entertaining, must all cinema necessarily be entertaining? Or is that as redundant as it sounds?

JF - I think yes, it must be entertaining. I know that important things can be explained in a film but don't do it in an awful un-moving way. I will take an example from literature. When you read a Caldwell novel you read a story. You follow the story; there's a lot of things happening in the drama and things. And then, when you close the book, you think, "Oh, my God, the situation of those guys in Tennessee is not very good." But you think about it. Then. After. But he never made a speech talking about it.

KC - His dramatics carried the message.

JF - Yes, so this is for me a good way for someone to explain something important in more than just a simple story. The only decent way to do it is that way. It's the most difficult way because you must be a very clever director and a clever scriptwriter to create sensations in an audience that will develop later when the film is over. To give you an example, **THE GRAPES OF WRATH**. It's a wonderful film, for me it's one of the best of John Ford's films. And it's about a very deep and difficult situation inflicted upon normal people in a certain period in the United States. But nobody has to come out and tell you that...

KC - But you still come away with all of that information...

JF - Yeah, I agree one hundred percent that this man is so clever that he is able to roll the two together: entertainment and information.

KC - You speak with admiration for Ford but the one American

director that everyone knows your fondness for is Orson Welles.

JF - Yeah.

KC - What is it about his directing or acting that impresses you the most about him?

JF - Oh, when I worked with him I discovered a lot of things from a technical point of view, such as in the creation of a geography - which he created himself for his films. He was able to transfer a piece like that [motions towards the other side of his living room] into a sanctuary from, let's say, the Confucius period of China in just a few hours. He had such an imagination. I can tell you, for instance, in the **CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT** the sequence of the coronation of Henry V was shot in a completely broken and destroyed church from the 14th Century in the north of Catalonia in Spain which had just two walls remaining standing and a couple of arches. And when you see this sequence... what?

KC - You look as if you're inside Winchester Cathedral... I'm sorry, Westminster...

JF - [laughs] Yes, you are inside Westminster Cathedral. He created it totally by himself.

KC - Not only does he create the illusion of a fully structured cathedral, he transforms a broken down Spanish one into a specific majestic British one.

JF - Yes.

KC - I hate to quantify such things but do you consider him, in your own opinion, to be the best of the American directors?

JF - I don't think he is the best American director. I think he's one of the best. He was very irregular because of his personal motivations and problems. But of the ten best directors in the cinema, I know one of them is Orson Welles.

KC - Would it be fair to draw comparisons between him and you?

JF - [ponders and exhales] There are big differences, enormous differences. When I worked with him I tried to forget my feelings and my own personality and just tried to approach the things he was thinking. I love this form of work. But I think Orson also believed that he was the greatest man in the world and the best actor just making films about Shakespeare, and he'd have you thinking like that. So he wasn't very humble, let's say. And I'm very humble. I don't take myself seriously. I don't believe I am anything. I'm just a man... [pauses]... working.

KC - Humility aside, in our prior conversations you have told me that it does bother you when people do not take you seriously or - better yet - when people assume that you do not approach your work seriously.

JF - No. My films are not important. This is the first thing. The second thing - and maybe I had explained myself badly last night - is that I tried to say that I can agree with someone when he says he saw my film, let's say **CAMINO SOLITARIO**, and he didn't like it, hated it, says it was very bad. I accept this perfectly. I am not furious with him. No, no, no. The problem is when he says that he didn't see the film. Don't judge me because of a reputation someone else gave to me.

KC - How about someone who hasn't seen your film the way you intended it which is how we got into this discussion last night. If they see it on video usually - and it's poorly dubbed, re-cut, re-edited, badly framed, not in widescreen, et cetera. Does this person have the right to express a poor opinion about your film or to judge you as a director?

JF - Yeah, okay, I understand. What I can say is to tell you how, in this case, I should approach another director or another artist. I would say that the way I saw that film, I didn't like it. But I will presume that I didn't see the film in the way the film was originally done: I saw an awful copy. But it is different because I am a technician. I can't tell you if I look at a video tape if it's a fourth or fifth generation but I can tell you that it's not a first generation, that it has very bad dubbing, that it is a very bad copy and maybe a pirate copy. I can tell you. If I see that I can tell you, "Look, I didn't like the film so much but I don't know if your real film is any good." The only thing I want is for people to judge me by my work, not by the distractions done to me, not by the awful English dubbing made in Marseilles. It's terrific when I hear the opinion of people who don't like my films at all, but please, look at them in the proper way and then tell me. And I will accept it, of course.

KC - Have you ever gotten involved in the video preparation of any of your films?

JF - Listen, I tried to do it in the best way I can when I am there (on the set). But my lifelong problem is that when I finish a film I have to give the producer the original copy and then I move from that town and that place and then it's someone else taking care of the Italian dubbing and, my God, I don't know what they are doing and into whose hands it has fallen.

KC - You really are a man of the cinema, of the movie theater. You never filmed with the idea of what you are seeing in the camera's eye, how that would appear on a television screen. Have you changed with the times?

JF - Yes, in the later years. Yes, because now there's something happening in our industry. Before we all made films for the big theaters and we were dreaming about the premises: the sound - the stereophonic sound - enormous screens, and beautiful color and all that. Because this is the most that could have happened to you. I would say that the first thing in my life that I like is to make films and the following thing is to look at the films of other people. Now it's very difficult (to have a big premiere) because people have tv and videos. They don't have to go out, to pay for parking, to pay three times more than to rent a video or to see it on cable on tv. So our industry is the same but it's just the place where you show the results that is different. It does change things a little bit in your mind. In some ways it is favorable and sometimes it is worse. It's not so beautiful, in a sense that this big show, this enormous big show is gone. But, as I said before, you can now make a film in three parts, longer films. Now a director can seriously think about making a long, long William Faulkner novel and develop it over four hours, or five maybe.

KC - Because the audience is no longer confined to watch it all in one sitting in a theater.

JF - Yes, because you'll have three video tapes and it's kind of a miniseries which you do a lot of in the States now. And now you can develop the characters in a way you couldn't before. Before, the directors only could do the themes of the novels and not the whole story. If you wanted to do the whole story then only the short novels were good to translate to the cinema. Because otherwise you had an enormous book like "The Brothers Karamazov" and Richard Brooks could make a wonderful film but it was not complete. Because it was impossible to do!

KC - He had to leave large parts of the story out.

JF - Of course, but now Richard Brooks himself could do a new **THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV** running five hours and I'm sure he could do a masterpiece. For these kinds of things this new medium of showing films on tv or video is very good for the director.

KC - So making the concession of giving up the majesty of the silver screen to reap the rewards of freedom of time may be worth it?

JF - Yes.

KC - Would you ever consider shooting directly on video?

JF - I will tell you what. As far as I know, and I think I have tried to get deeply into the heart of this problem, the video negative masters are not as fantastic as, say, you can get if you shoot in 35mm, 70mm, or even 16mm. Even in 16mm you shoot and you have a master for a whole life if it's kept in a lab at a good temperature. And from this master you make your video master which for two years is okay but then it starts to lose colors and focus and things. Even the quality of the sound goes down. But when the moment comes that video can produce a real negative that you can keep for a very long time, then I will shoot in video. Ah, yes! I like video. You've got a lot of facilities, you can see immediately the takes you have just shot. You can take the actors and say, "Look at this! It wasn't right because you did so and so and so and so. Now let's do it again." And even for additions you are much freer. If you have a proper editing room you can do effects which are similar to the expensive ones in the cinema; but here they are very easy to do. So I think the *specularity* [sic] you lose; but you gain other things.

KC - One of the effects that you have employed which has drawn a lot of criticism - and its negativity is heightened on tv and poorly cropped videos - is the zoom. It's been claimed that you have over used it. Have you? Is the criticism valid?

JF - No, I used it a lot in one period of my life. Now I use it only a few times, just when I really need it to explain something in my film, you know? But I did because I was very poor. I made films and I could not afford a dolly.

KC - And so it is an inexpensive way to get from here to there...

JF - It's much cheaper to go like that [mimics moving the zoom knob on a camera] than to have a track dolly and then to hire two employees to push it. And all these things I can do with my finger! I never loved the zoom but I think it was useful to me to help to explain some things in my films.

KC - Unfortunately, now that video is the medium of the moment to see your old films, these zooms tend to wear the effect because what was in proper proportion on the large screen goes all out of proportion on a small screen which is usually cropped of most of its dimensions so that you lose all sense of proportion.

JF - Yeah.

KC - One of the highlights of your career happened a few years ago when you had the opportunity to edit and finish Orson Welles' **DON QUIXOTE**. Did you feel up to the task? Did you believe you knew what Welles' intentions were?

JF - Yes. That doesn't mean the final cut, the edition I made in post production, matches what he would have done if he was alive. I'm not sure if he would like it. Because I knew him very well and he was against the final cut of **TOUCH OF EVIL**. [Exasperated] **TOUCH OF EVIL** is a masterpiece to me. I've discussed this with him. He didn't do the final cut or the post production. I think it was Robert Parrish who did it for him. Robert Parrish loved Orson Welles; he was not an enemy trying to destroy his work. And Orson was very unhappy when we talked about **TOUCH OF EVIL**.

He said, "It's not my film, that **TOUCH OF EVIL**."

I said, "It's not your film?"

He said, "I never saw it. This Robert Parrish changed everything..." and so on.

We had begun this conversation because that was the year that Henry Mancini won the Oscar for "Best Music". I had traveled to meet with Orson and when I arrived I said, "Bravo, congratulations, your composer won the Oscar."

[In his best Orson Welles' imitation] "My composer! Who's my composer?"

I said, "Your composer, Henry Mancini."

"I don't know Henry Mancini!"

I said, "My God, you know Henry Mancini. Everybody knows Henry Mancini!"

He said, "No. We never met; I don't know him!"

[Laughing] I said, "What about **TOUCH OF EVIL**?"

He said, "Arrgh! It's not my film!"

So it started like that. He told me he never saw it. I don't think he was being totally true. But I said, "You can go, it's showing in a cinema here in Madrid. Go immediately to see this film because it's wonderful."

[imitating Welles] "Oh, yes? Do you believe that?"

Of course I believed it.

And so Orson, if he was alive he would have been saying to me (in the editing room), [shouts] "Do this, that and that!" But about his own work he did the same. After he made **CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT**, having done the final cutting and the mixing of the film, we had to go to the office of Harry Saltzman to deliver it and to have the contract paid. When we arrived - the Spanish producer and me - at the office, the lawyer met us and said in frustration, "Come in, come in..." And Orson Welles was there saying he was not about to agree to the exhibition of this version of the film. And it was the version he made himself after months and months and months and months! Changing the voices, changing the music, and doing lots and lots of various things. And then we did the mixing in Paris and he was happy about the mixing. And yet, ten days later, when the copy arrived and we went to the office to deliver it, he was there saying, "No, no. I want to mix it again!"

KC - By the same token, is there anybody who knows you - who you feel knows you well enough - that would be able to faithfully complete one of your films should the same situation present itself?

JF - Yes.

KC - And who would that be?

JF - [Pointing across the room] Lina Romay. Yes, Lina directed a lot of scenes, a lot of things, and has edited. Many times she made almost the complete edition - with my agreement of course - but she made it herself. She knows me, I think, better than anybody. And then, I think, Antonio Mayans also understands me but not so deeply as Lina. Apart from the obvious reasons, it's because Antonio is not so deeply concerned about all of our themes and our personages as is Lina.

KC - Lina knows much more of the inner working of Jess Franco.

JF - Yes, the inside. The form Antonio could do because he's very clever and he knows a lot about techniques and things. But Lina - who maybe would not be as brilliant on each shot (as Antonio) - deep inside, what she would bring out would be much closer to me.

KC - How many of your unfinished films are there laying about?

JF - Unfinished?

KC - Yes.

JF - I have a lot of unfinished films. I can tell you something. The problem is now that people are talking about my films and making lists. And they are looking for "what happened to that film you wanted to do?" and things like that. I wanted to do so many films that lots of times I started and I would be shooting a film only to stop for the weekend on Saturday. And then, instead of coming back to Madrid or Paris or wherever we were working, I decided to start another picture, you know, "back to back". And the next Monday we would start another film. And then we'd shoot three or four days and then: *no more money!* And so the film was not "unfinished" but rather "not done".

KC - "Not yet finished"...

JF - Right. I have five or six films in this situation. And then I have one film that I made recently that is called **JUNGLE OF FEAR**. I finished it but it's not finished in a way I like. [laughs] Just like Orson Welles. Okay... a poor Orson Welles. But I don't like the film. I don't want to show it because, although I think that most of it is quite all right, we made the ending in such an awful condition - because of, you know... lack of money. With its intricacies and things, I just think it's badly finished. I need to shoot another four days and then, after the original one week of filming... I mean three weeks of filming... for me that's a big production...!

KC - Yes! [laughs]

JF - [laughing] So it can be a nice film. It's based on "The Golden Beetle" by Edgar Allan Poe. It's a wonderful story and it's been done a lot of times. For instance, Steven Spielberg made the second "Indiana Jones" based on the same story. He took another point of view to most of it but, basically, it's the same thing. I think it's wonderful. So we set ours in our time. It's about a group of young people working for a video company who discover the Golden Beetle. The film is trimmed in a funny way. I think the performances are very nice. It was the last William Berger film. He died two months or so later. Charlie Chaplin, you know, the little son [grandson - ed.] of the famous Charlie, is in there and is very good. And Lina is very good. And I have some actors which are not very well known. American actors who were running around doing theatre in Barcelona. We chose these people and they are very good. I think the only problem I've got is that there's not enough money to end it properly. The film is another film which is "not ended". In general they say to me, "What about a fourth Orlof?" It's true, I started another Orlof but three days later I decided to stop because I saw it was a catastrophe. I tried to do it, push it to completion, but no. So I have some pieces of negative, which are mine, in a lab. And one day maybe - probably, of course - I will complete it or re-shoot it one hundred percent. But I never say, later on, that I started a film or I made a film and then it was not finished. You know, I made some very small films with a company called Golden. Do you know them?

KC - Golden Films Internacional, the Spanish company.

JF - Yes. And I made films for this Golden because the producer - and I made a lot of films with him - was excited and said, "We have to do one or two more right away!" He was going on like that and we started shooting without stopping. Shooting and dubbing and mixing! Really like a factory. And then some of them on which I had made the final edition - the mixing, the titles, everything - remained unreleased. [perplexed] It's a mystery not understandable to me. They remained in his office. Maybe it's a matter of taxes, because

he's considered a small producer and a small producer does not produce eight films one by one by one like that. And his idea - I suppose (because) he never told me - was to present four of them and then the next year he would present more, two or three more, you know?

KC - Sure, he'd have them in the can but only proportion the releases out over a period of time.

JF - But from that moment on the new government changed its laws. Because until that moment a Spanish film would have kind of an official protection, official help in taxes as well as in chances to be shown. There was a percentage (of films to be shown) that had to be Spanish, as well as for the distribution companies, as for the cinema, as for the theaters, tv, et cetera. But when they suddenly decided to accept any film off the Common Market - with the same rights, not just Spanish - that day it killed eighty percent of the Spanish productions. I can tell you that one year before the new government arrived the number of full-length films produced in Spain was 150. Two years later it was 30. There's the proof.

KC - Hard to dispute that.

JF - It really destroyed the industry. It was a great industry. I'm not saying there was a lot of good films but the industry was very serious with the elements it had and with its technicians. Most of the technicians now are on the tv or are working in another job or something. Guys who were in production, for example, are now working in publicity or other things; but they aren't working at making movies in the cinema anymore. It's a pity because there was a great stock of good technicians here. I don't say that just because of myself. I can give you the examples of Orson Welles, Nicholas Ray, or Robert Siodmak, or a lot of very important directors in the world who had set up shop here in Spain. They loved the quality of the technicians, the directors of photography, and the set builders. They were fantastic, first class.

KC - Coincidentally we are talking today on the eve of new elections here in Madrid so there's always hope that things will change for the better again.

JF - Yes, I hope so.

KC - There is so much interest these days on the part of your fans to dig up all the esoteria, as we said, the "unfinished" or "not yet finished" films, the lost films, and so on, that we tend to forget all of your successes - the worldwide successes - beginning with *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE*, "The Awful Dr. Orlof" in 1961.

JF - Yes.

KC - What was the immediate impact the success of *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE* had upon your career at the time? Were bigger budgets offered to you?

JF - No. I never got bigger budgets for the next ones, never. No, they wanted to make another very successful film - like "Orlof" - with the same low budget. Everything the same, you know: low budget and big profit.

KC - So you got the recognition and nothing more to work

with?

JF - Yes. I can tell you, for instance, when my film 99 *WOMEN* came out I had a terrible problem with it because the company... A.I.P.?... I think. I don't know, was it A.I.P. or Commonwealth United? I don't remember which one it was that picked it up for American release.

KC - Commonwealth United.

JF - So. Right. When they saw the film they said, "Ah, this is shit! You make another film like that and you are completely finished in the States. You'll never make an American film." They said that and then one month later the film was the first - number one! - in the list of the best box offices. In "Variety" it was the best for three weeks! Number one! And the cost of the film was only around two-hundred thousand dollars or something like that.

KC - So they reaped the financial rewards from a film they told you was terrible.

JF - Yes, but no. Then it was very funny because later I was in London preparing another film and they came and they invited me to *Simpson's* - of course the best English or British restaurant in London - and they explained to me... actually the guy who originally spoke to me said, "I was wrong. Your film is much more beautiful than I thought when I first looked at it. When I saw the film I didn't know what it was and I had read a

lot of reviews saying negative things about it." So, did they decide to give me four million dollars for my next film to make a really big film? No! They decided to give me more films to do but all with the same budget to get the same profit!

KC - Is there a film prior to *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE*, prior to your international fame, that stands out for you as something of which you are particularly proud?

JF - The first film I made, *TENEMOS 18 AÑOS* - "We are 18" - I saw it recently. I think there was a lot of funny ideas in it. Maybe it wasn't completely a good film but I think it was nice to look at. Funny. And then *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE* put an end to that period. But I don't like it so much. *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE*. I think it's a museum piece, no vitality.

KC - Up until that time, even including *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE*, you were taking a rather standard approach to your stories.

JF - Yes, that's right, yes.

KC - After *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE* you began to move into more genre-related subjects with *stranger, odder, and more vibrant stories*. Was there an influence upon you, perhaps by producers, to do this or was this strictly a conscious decision on your part?

JF - Yes, I wanted to do that, yes. I wanted to, because *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE* opened a path for me. First, I decided to make *GRITOS EN LA NOCHE* and I will tell you why. We had a project to do after the two films I had made in co-production with France, with Lesœur - it was my first contact with Marius Lesœur. I had made two musical films. One is *MARIQUITA, LA REINA DEL TABARIN* and the other is the "30s" [*VAMPRESAS 1930* - cd.], I made them one after the other. And these films



were musicals, funny stories. The first was a little bit romantic, the second was a comedy with beautiful music because we got the rights to ten tunes of Charles Trenet who is one of the biggest European composers of tunes. These are classics now, like "Your Hand in Mine" and "La Mer" ("Tu Mano en Mi Mano" and "El Mar" - ed.), things like that. I got the rights for that and we made the films. We made a beautiful, beautiful music track and the film was successful. Everything was all right. And when we were finishing the edition and the computation of the film, we presented our next film project to the Spanish censorship. This was the premiere censorship to whom you had to present your project during Franco's period with a completed script. And they would decide if everything was okay: the script, the characters. They would go through it and some things were completely barred and others were okay to be included. We presented a film that I liked very much because it was a film based upon a kind of popular story of Central America that I knew from childhood - because my mother was from Cuba and my father was originally from Mexico. So it was a story I knew since I was four years old and this story was forbidden by the censorship! We were (already) preparing the film and the two producers had actors under contract and we didn't know what to do. We were in Nice in the French Riviera finishing the last film and... what to do? So there was this cinema in town showing **THE BRIDES OF DRACULA**. And I had an idea because my two producers were quite valiant and cultured. So I said, "Let's go to town to the cinema. I will show you a film that's playing here, a very successful film. A Terence Fisher film with very good actors." They went there and they saw **BRIDES OF DRACULA**, the first "Dracula" they ever saw in their lives. And they were very impressed, both of them. They said, "Since we have troubles with the censorship, why don't we do something in this way? Nobody would say anything because there's no politics involved in it, no problems with the congressional people of the actual situation in Spain." Ah, it was a good idea and I wrote **GRITOS EN LA NOCHE** in a minute! I explained all of that to you mostly because I discovered a way to make films that I like - kind of in the well of mystery and parapsychology - that I liked since I was eight years old and started to go to the movies. For instance, Hitchcock's **SPELLBOUND** was, for me, a shock! So I thought this would be interesting because I am a big admirer of the German and the then-American cinema: the expressionists.

KC - Like **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI** or **THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN**...

JF - Also the painters and the writers of this period, the expressionists, made their mark on me. So I thought I could develop this and suddenly I had a nice way to go ahead (making movies).

KC - You used **BRIDES OF DRACULA** in your plan to make a new movie...

JF - No, I used **BRIDES OF DRACULA** to try to hold on to the producers! [laughs]

KC - ...I've heard different stories about your feelings towards those Hammer films. I've heard that you didn't think much of them and I've also heard that you were so impressed that you named one of your characters, Dr. Fisherman, in homage to the famous Hammer director Terence Fisher.

JF - Yeah.

KC - Did you admire his work?

JF - Listen, I will tell you that I don't hate it but I don't like it as much as do a lot of guys who love the cinema fantastic or

horror films from the Hammer period. I think the Hammer period is okay. They're worth being reassessed because they are very important. They pushed again a style that was completely new at that moment.

KC - It was a style that had its time and then it passed.

JF - Yes, but they are cold.

KC - Very antiseptic, very distant. You're not involved with the characters so much as the story is reported to you.

JF - Si, si! Very antiseptic. I don't like it. I prefer - and in literature too - the people who get you involved, who come through to you in the thing; not a reporter looking on from afar, from a big distance, saying, "Hey, what are those four people doing?" You know? I think Jean Renoir said, "Cinema is a matter of love." And I don't think Fisher or the other Hammer directors loved the people their films were talking about.

KC - Now I really like the Hammer films, they are sort of the flip side to your career. Whereas you bring the spirit of Jess Franco to your work, they mostly bring the technical expertise. And they are very well done.

JF - They were technicians, cold technicians. Very well done, beautiful...but no soul.

KC - On the subject of technique, I read in an old German magazine that you once said that you would purposely shoot part of a scene out of focus and then derive some pleasure when the guy who developed the film would think that the scene would be ruined because of the focusing mistake.

JF - No, sometimes I shoot that way intentionally and then [laughs] sometimes it just happens. Something just went out of focus! But whenever I did it intentionally it was just because I didn't want to ... to ... see. You know? Maybe it's happened to you, I know it's happened to me, when something is so nasty that I don't want to see it clearly. I prefer to have a look that is desensitized, to make it easier to forget it. I don't know if I was so successful with it but sometimes I tried to give my impression about something, to be an impressionist - let's say - like the painters. If you come too close to the picture you don't like what you see.

KC - So you were holding the audience's hands over their eyes, peeking at the screen for them?

JF - Yes.

KC - I also notice that you often play with light sources in your films. You'll shoot the sun coming through the window and purposefully try to pick up the halo effect or the rainbow.

JF - I love it.

KC - Many directors try to avoid just that. Because it shatters the illusion of reality. It reminds the viewer that we are watching something that has been filmed by a camera.

JF - [chuckles] I love to do it. It's just a matter of personality. My parents, as I told you, were from very hot countries, very sunny places, very hot weather. And I think I have it in my mind, this light, this kind of strong light coming in on you, from the windows of my childhood. You know, when I first shot in Brazil, the Brazilian crew was astonished that I could withstand the hot weather there. Themselves, they were helping me to set the camera up on things and then they would be running for cover under the trees or something. But I would remain in the sun. They said to me, "Where are you from?"

Horror meets Horror in a hideous fight to the death



This is impossible!" I'd say, "I'm from a place that's even hotter than Brazil's forest." So I think this idea about the hot weather, about the sun coming in, about the light being this queer rainbow light, is just something that I have deep inside of me and sometimes, when I feel the atmosphere of the film has to be like that, I do it.

KC - In a film such as *EL HUNDIMIENTO DE LA CASA USHER* [USA video title: *REVENGE IN THE HOUSE OF USHER* - ed.] the exterior scenes are so exceedingly bright, almost too bright for a horror film, that I wonder if this too was a conscious choice on your part.

JF - Oh, yes, yes, yes.

KC - It does contrast well with the incredibly dark interior scenes when it often appears as though there's never enough light.

JF - But, you know what? It happens for the same reason. I also made a film called *RIFFIFI EN LA CIUDAD*... no?

KC - With Fernando Gomez... "Riffifi in the city" is the English translation but I don't think there is an actual English version...

JF - I don't know how you call it in different languages but it was a film set in northern Venezuela - and I know northern

Venezuela - and the sun there is terrific. And inside they always put straw and things in the windows so they are almost in darkness. Just because the sun is too strong. For instance, if you see the Andre de Toth film called "Troubled Waters" [sic; *DARK WATERS* - ed.], a wonderful film set in Louisiana with fantastic actors Franchot Tone, Thomas Mitchell, Merle Oberon, all beautiful actors. It was done very well. I think it was the first time I saw this thing with the silk on the suit of the people. The suits were white and the silk was too white and... urgh!... [shields eyes as if being blinded]. Then when people are entering the southern style houses - with lots of wood and stalls and very comfortable - they are very dark. I said to myself, "Brilliant idea!" This film "Troubled Waters" was a horror film - well, not a true horror film - and that effect was great. It was fantastic. The heat... people were wet. The shirts were wet and everything like that.

KC - One of your films which is very dark and claustrophobic is your version of *Bram Stoker's novel* which you entitled *EL CONDE DRACULA*.

JF - The idea was to remake and to be faithful to Bram Stoker's novel. I tried to do it. I tried but not, of course, with the same amount of money as Francis Ford Coppola.

KC - All he proved is that a lot of money doesn't guarantee a good movie.

JF - But I think I was quite happy about my treatment. I think my treatment of the hook is much more close to the spirit of Bram Stoker than Coppola's.

KC - Oh, by far...

JF - Coppola is very faithful in a lot of situations - in the letters and in a lot of things in the literal sense - but his characters are traitors to Bram Stoker. If Dracula deeply loves someone then he should be hitting this person all day because love with Count Dracula is a union of the blood between two people - him and his lover or his victim. It's not a love that you would consider like Scarlett O'Hara or those romantic kinds of people. You know? I think, number one, that he made his "Dracula" too much like an Italian opera and too much like a romantic story - through the point of view of someone who's not evil enough to understand what love means for a vampire. It's as simple as that. My "Dracula"? I saw it recently and it's all right. I don't believe it's a masterpiece or anything like that. I hate that word. I've never made a masterpiece so I don't know what that means either. I think my film is all right and I think Christopher is very good in my film.

KC - I've heard your opinion on this before and so I don't want to steer you into a corner, but do you think Christopher Lee is the best Count Dracula?

JF - [ponders] Aahh, I think... no. No. I think Bela Lugosi was great because he had - as I was telling you - this "mad eye". Bela Lugosi was a little bit fantastic! And then I must tell you that in *DRACULA AGAINST FRANKENSTEIN*, which I made, I think Howard Vernon is great. Because Howard is a very clever man, he knows the cinema very deeply and he knows the expressionist manner. He played an expressionist Dracula which was one hundred percent of my ideal. But Christopher... you know Christopher didn't like Count Dracula. He said it, you know?

KC - I've often heard him complain that he didn't like the way he had to portray Count Dracula in the Hammer series.

JF - He was always saying, "if one day we can do this beautiful story of Bram Stoker's erotic novel..." But then, when the time arrived, he was afraid. He was afraid to become younger and younger as in the book. He asked me, "Are you sure we should do this? Because I've made a hundred Draculas before and I've always stayed the same." I told him, "We're making the book. Forget about your 'Dracula' films and think about the beautiful erotic book we're trying to translate to the screen." And we added some things which were not in the original script such as the Bela Lugosi tribute of "the children of the night" and the speech in front of the chimney. And I think he played it wonderfully. It was my third or fourth film with Christopher and I think it was the first time I really felt emotion in him. At first I thought he was a great professional, a very good actor, serious, knowing his lines perfectly, but, just like the Hammer films which he was often in, he was cold, he was distant, there was a wall between him and me. You know?

KC - Well, he was almost not even in a lot of the Hammer "Draculas" in which he supposedly starred. And even then his character had very little to do.

JF - And this time, I think, my film, is the first time he jumped over that wall.

KC - I'm sure you've seen Pedro Portabella's documentary on EL CONDE DRACULA, entitled CUADRECUC...

JF - I like it very much, very much. Because I think it's the other side of the whole thing. Pedro Portabella, in my mind, is a very clever guy. He's a good director who never got any chances in this country - and probably no country in the world except for a strange one like Sweden or something. He made a film which had no compassion at all. But it was very clever. His point of view is plastic but it's fantastic and I love it.

KC - In EL CONDE DRACULA your cast also included your favorite female performer of that period, Soledad Miranda.

JF - Yes.

KC - I know this is a rough and emotional subject for you, so let's just start with her acting. How would you rate her as an actress?

JF - Listen, the first film Soledad ever made she did with me.

KC - She was in MARQUITA LE REINA DU TABARIN...

JF - Yes. Soledad was a half-gypsy girl from Seville and she came into Madrid to look for a chance to work in theatre or movies or something. She was from the family of Paquita Rico. Paquita Rico was quite a famous singer and comedienne in Spain, a very beautiful woman who made a lot of films in France. And Soledad was a very tiny woman - a young woman when she worked with me in LA REINA DU TABARIN. Paquita Rico and Mikaela Lora - who herself was a normal half-gypsy girl - told me about her and asked me to give her a little part and that's how I met Soledad. And she was a very special kind of female. She was not clever. She had no information - education - or any culture. She came from a very low, low, low class family of half-gypsy people. But she had a personality which translated to the screen a lot of the things that she felt deep inside. But it translated in an unconscious way. She was a funnel. It was very simple for me to explain things to her. She got it immediately because she was like a funnel. I think she had this special thing that

the stars have. It's not that you have to be a great actor but when this actor enters the scene you don't look at anybody else - you only look at this girl or this guy. And she had this. She was a very sweet and very nice person. And I think Soledad was fantastic in my "Dracula". Even Christopher was very impressed. Then I proposed to her to do different films with Arthur Brauner in Germany. I offered her the chance to come with us because until that moment she had never played a main part. I wanted her to play main parts and interesting parts not only because she showed she could already play the stupid teenager but because she had this "something". And she immediately accepted. The films we made together were always with this company - for Brauner - until the end. We went to Portugal. The manager of production was a German guy, Karl Heinz Mannchen, who was working with me since NECRONOMICON. But he was living in Spain, you know. So he and I went to Portugal to offer her a wonderful contract from Brauner [choking back tears]... and we took an appointment for the next morning and she died before arriving [voice trails off]

KC - [after a pause] Do you think, knowing her and her abilities as you do, that she would have become an international star?

JF - Sure, sure [very quietly, trailing off], I believe so. You know, I think actors are - and Nicholas Ray told me this... There are two kinds of actors: pure actors who don't have to be clever or anything, just to have this lean, this kind of thing pushing them, an energy. Normally they are not too interesting as human beings, just good for acting...

KC - Like painting on an empty canvas...

JF - And other people - the second kind of actors - are actors and other things; like Peter Ustinov or Orson Welles or people like that who are very complex. They can be very clever as human beings as well as being clever on film. But of those pure ones, actors who are just actors, Nicholas gave me the example of Henry Fonda who was, for me, one of the best actors there ever was on the screen. Ray said, "But he's just an actor. He can talk about himself, his next project, how successful his last picture was, and nothing else. These are actors you have to use the way they are." And I think Soledad was a case like that. She had such a personal punch. Completely! She didn't know why. She never studied a school of theatre or cinema. Nada. Nothing.

KC - She brought no outside experience to her roles, everything came from the inside out?

JF - Yes, and it happened very often with the gypsy people. The Spanish gypsy people. Mikaela who made two films with me, well, to write in Spanish she was like this [makes painfully slow writing movements] and she was possibly the worst speller in the world! If you looked at her hands, she had beautiful hands but the skin was awful, you know? Because after shooting she would go home to her flat to clean the floors. You'd never ask her to think about acting. You'd tell her, "You do that." And... pop!... she did it. And she had, those gypsies had, a kind of majesty and personal class. Who knows why? Because there's no reason for it. They work very well and they pose in a fantastic way - a lot of them. Soledad was a maximum of this kind of person.

KC - After Soledad died, a few years later Lina came on the scene. I discussed this with her earlier. I have read - most specifically in an interview from 1974 that you gave to Alain Petit - where you were quoted as saying that Lina sometimes became Soledad in your eyes. Were you trying to recreate Soledad through Lina?

succubus

"WAY-OUT, EROTIC-SEXY!"

— GORE SALMAGGI

This motion picture is rated
adults only, naturally.



Because of the unusual nature of the title, we suggest you call [redacted] (for the full) meaning so that you will not be surprised by the sophisticated subject matter of this film.



JF - [after a very long pause] I don't think so. No, no, no. Do you know what happened? I think it's another thing. Soledad came to me in a moment where my ideal of the main actress of my films was that way. I agree that the "kind" of Lina was the same "kind" as Soledad. But it's just a "kind", it's not that I translated Soledad to Lina. No, I translated an ideal I had. Diana Lorys, Soledad, and Lina were all from the same ideal. It's also a logical development of my career - but this time following the same kind of woman. Which kind of woman is it, finally? I can tell you that when I was a child... Well, Sergio Leone once said, "I want to make in cinema the films I liked to see as a child and nobody showed me." This thing is a little bit like that. I was in love with Simone Simon. Really! I was a child like that [indicates knee-high] but I was like this [mimics gawking at the movie screen]... "Oh, my God!"

KC - That's understandable.

JF - I was able to see the films of Simone Simon everyday! [laughs] You know? The same films! It corresponded into a type of woman for me and I think, this "kind" is still attractive to me. So, I'd say Diana first, then Soledad, and then

Lina are all in that way.

KC - Even to the point where other "lesser" stars in your films - such as *Montserrat Prous* - would fit neatly into a very similar physical type.

JF - Yes, I would say so. Physically.

KC - But then the oft-repeated quote attributed to you that, "...at times Lina became Soledad..." is not accurate?

JF - No. This was after the first two or three films with Lina in which strange things happened. It was like ... ah, well ... parapsychological [makes Lugosi-like finger gestures] - to compare it to a film, eh? We were shooting in Madaira, for instance, and it was like Soledad was there. In *VAMPYROS LESBOS* there is a handkerchief, or a ...

LR - A foulard .. [a scarf - ed.]

JF - ...a foulard. Soledad had this foulard in the film and then we found it in Madaira. [arches eyebrows] You know? It was these kinds of small things, very mysterious things... And, of course, in those first two or three films Lina, too, had the feeling that Soledad was vampirising us. But this doesn't mean that it was something I had in mind to use Lina as a continuation of Soledad. Because in the beginning it wasn't Soledad. It was Simone Simon! [laughs]

LR - [laughs]

KC - Another actress - somewhat different from Soledad and Lina - was Janine Reynaud who made a short series of films with you.

JF - Janine Reynaud made three films with me. But, as a matter of fact, she made one! Because I don't think those "*Labios Rojos*" films - such as *BESAME, MONSTRUO* were good films for Janine Reynaud. I was against using her for those films. Yes! I will tell you, at first I had an idea to give Diana Lorys the part in *NECRONOMICON*. But then I decided Diana wasn't elegant enough to play this part - because Diana was not gypsy and she was a very "popular" girl. She was very pretty, very sexy and everything, but she didn't have this distant and mysterious class that the person in *NECRONOMICON* had to have. So I tried it with two different people first. I had rehearsals and I made sketches and things. One day I was in Rome and suddenly a guy whom I'd met in met in Paris before, Michel Lemoine ... you know him?

KC - Yes, right.

JF - ...came into this bistro or restaurant with Janine Reynaud...

KC - Were they married at that time?

JF - Yes. Si, they were married. And I looked at her and I said, "This is the woman for *NECRONOMICON*," because she wasn't young, she wasn't beautiful, but the whole restaurant turned their heads to look at her. And I did too - after! I was having lunch. I don't remember with whom. And suddenly I saw people going like this [turning to look at something or someone]. So I thought that maybe Raquel Welch was coming! [stands up to get a better look] And it wasn't Raquel Welch. It was a completely unknown girl. But she had such an aura and personality, such a class, that everybody was ogling her. And I was a friend but I knew Michel very well so I went to him and asked him to introduce me. He said, "It's my wife, Janine Reynaud." I asked him what does she do and he told me she was a mannequin - a model - from Jean Partout in Paris. She'd had a couple of small parts in

films - co-productions with small American companies and things. I said to her, "Are you interested to play the main part in my film ... nah, nah, nah..... I gave her the story and she said "yes" immediately. And they wanted to show me the small parts she made before and I said, "I don't want to see these small parts. Don't show me that!" Because maybe I wouldn't like her acting. But I didn't care, the thing was, "she is the person who will make the film." She was such a success, a personal success, that I had a contract at that time with Constantine Films in Germany to make two more films. And the subjects were already decided so we had to do these films. And they decided they wanted to use Janine as the star. And these films... I thought the parts weren't good enough for Janine. Normal parts, you know, kind of like anybody could play them. And I said she was a mistake. But they said to me, "Oh, no, it's Janine Reynaud, the star, and bish, blah, bish... we'll put Janine in them..." But I was quite unhappy. I told her it was a pity; because in the style of **NECRONOMICON** she would possibly have had a wonderful career. Janine is an exception to my Simone Simon way because she has nothing to do with that type.

KC - Not even the physical appearance.

JF - No. It's completely different. But she had the personality to play that part. And before that I had Diana Lorys, as I told you. I made four or five films with her. And Diana was very pretty but she was a "popular" girl, sort of like Simone or more like the kind of Sophia Loren - at the beginning of her career - when she was just playing the fisherman's daughter and things like that. Then, when I found Lina, it was by chance. Lina came by chance. We were filming in the south of Spain and she came to meet someone on the crew. When I saw her I said "Oh, my God, this is a fantastic possibility." And we started working and started to live together as a real couple.

KC - It's pretty obvious that it was a successful relationship on all fronts.

JF - And the real difference between Lina and all the rest of the women in my cinematographic life is that Lina is much more clever and she loves the cinema much more than anyone else... techniques and things. I showed you the trailer she has already edited for the film I am working on, **KILLER BARBYS**. You've seen it. She did it. I think it's first class.

KC - You don't have to convince me about Lina's talents. The trailer is simply stupendous. It's very tightly edited and quite unlike anything I've ever seen associated with any of your films.

JF - [smiles] Yes.

LR - Thank you both very much.

KC - You're welcome.

JF - First class.

*KC - Back to the release of **NECRONOMICON**. There was nothing in your previous work that gave any hint that this style of film was within your personal oeuvre.*

JF - Uh-huh.

KC - It's almost in a vacuum. It came out of nowhere. Where did the seed for this originate?

JF - **NECRONOMICON** is based on the writings of a Jewish Spanish writer from the beginning of the 16th Century. He wrote a short book about demonic theories called "Necronomicon". It means "the second life" or "the return of

the dead" - along those lines. You know?

KC - It's often referred to as "The Book of the Dead" Right?

JF - Yes, I think so. And this poor man was condemned by the Inquisition. He was tortured and killed and the book was destroyed. But some parts of the book survived and remained in the University of Seville. Who knows why? Well, he was from around this area so it's not so strange. And a part of this book was received by the University of Vienna where Lovecraft probably took notice of it. Because, as you know, Lovecraft talks about these strange things in his own "Necronomicon" all the time. And, as a matter of fact, everybody thought it was an invention of Lovecraft.

KC - I'll be the first to admit that I always used to believe the "Necronomicon" was exclusively Lovecraft's domain ...

JF - Me too! And when I was in Berlin I was talking to a very special man - he was a very rich producer, a man from the family of Simons which is one of the most important ancestries - he had lots of money, lots of planes, lots of cars. I think he had a car for each hour of the day! But he was a young man. And this young man was a mixture of being very snobbish yet, at the same time, he had a lot of very good traits. He was a lover of music. He knew a lot about it and he was the same way about literature. One day I was invited to his home because he wanted to hear a singer who was very new at the time. I don't remember who it was... [stops to think]... ah, yes, Al Jarreau. It was Al Jarreau. And I had the first recordings of Al Jarreau. I was in his library and suddenly I saw a book, "Necronomicon". And I said, "What the hell is that 'Necronomicon'? Is that Lovecraft?" And he said it wasn't Lovecraft. So I took the book down. It was a very expensive edition with a paper saying it was number one of the ten copies of the text remaining at the University of Vienna. It was introduced with an explanation about this man, this Jewish Spanish writer, and the story of his life. I asked him to lend me that book so I could read it that night and I said I would bring it back the next day. The parts of the book that still remained were moralities, examples of old times, examples of this man's theories. One of them was not even two pages. Very short. But it was so beautiful that I made a photocopy before I sent him back the book. [grins] I made a photocopy of both sides and then I made the film with these two pages. I kept them hidden in an envelope and submitted my own manuscript to the Ministry - for obvious reasons - but, in fact, I made the film with these two pages. And it was wonderful. So this is why this film is so different. It's a break in my career, if you wish, this **NECRONOMICON**, because I was so impressed by something completely new and fantastic.

KC - This wasn't a subject that was presented to you by a producer or thought of by yourself. It was completely from a third source ...

JF - It was by chance that I read that book. I immediately wrote a synopsis about it. In Berlin I immediately got the man to co-produce the film and then I had to look for someone else because he didn't want to be involved as the lone producer one hundred percent. Because he wasn't a producer. He was a man who was financing parts of some films and some things but he was not a "cinema man". So it was through my friend, Karl Heinz Munsch, that I got in contact with Adrian Hoven, the actor and producer. And both wound up making the production with this Simons.

*KC - Right behind you there on the wall is a poster from **LE SADIQUE DE NOTRE DAME** which features one of your familiar set-pieces, the crossed-bar torture device. Was this film the first time you used that - in the nightclub act?*

ERWIN C. DIETRICH
PREZ

AVIS
FILM

Ruf der blonden Göttin

VICKY ADAMS

ADAM TALLER JACK TAYLOR RAPINE GAMBRIER
Y FREY PITA MORENO SANDRA DAEGELIKER

Regie: JESS FRANCO

Actor Jack Taylor starred in many of Franco's seventies productions.

JF - In *NECRONOMICON*?

KC - *NECRONOMICON*.

JF - Yes.

KC - You've gone back to that scenario frequently since then...

JF - Not frequently, just four times or something like that. I don't think more than that, no?

KC - Got me. It sure seems like more than that. Was the script for *NECRONOMICON* actually co-written with Pier Caminacci?

JF - The script? No!

KC - You wrote it entirely yourself, right?

JF - Yes. You know, the thing was that it was a German film. Now it's easier, but in that period it was different. We were Spanish: the script was in Spanish, the director was Spanish, the director of photography was Spanish, a couple of actors were Spanish, and so on. At that time there was a German law that said that 80% of the actors and technicians had to be German. Janine Reynaud wasn't German and Jack Taylor wasn't German - he was an American who lived in Spain. So we had to add, or forge [laughs] a number of false collaborations with German people. For instance, the director of photography was Jorge Herrero, who made it one hundred per-

cent. But they also signed him with a German director of photography who was a friend of Adrian Hoven who did nothing. I don't even know if he came to see the film. He was never there. "Lederle" or something like that. [Franz X. Lederle - ed.] He was a real director of photography in Germany but we had to use some names. So Caminacci decided to put his name in with the name of Adrian Hoven and with my name on the script.

KC - So you were totally responsible for the script. That would include the word association game between Janine and Howard Vernon?

JF - Sure. I am responsible for all of the film.

KC - Okay, then, obviously the answers that she gives are supposed to have a meaning ...

JF - Yes.

KC - So is there a deep Freudian meaning behind this or is it just some stylish and mod sixties' pretension?

JF - I'll tell you the truth. I wanted them both to have an intellectual meeting. I had this idea to do this kind of game to make the sequence more interesting than if it was just two people meeting and talking. You know, this was the times of the first films of...what's his name... Eric...

LR - Eric Rohmer.

JF - Ah, Eric Rohmer. The first Eric Rohmer films. I hate these kinds of films. But I didn't want to fall into these kinds of things, you know, where people are making love but are talking about the Johnsonists. It's funny for me. I wanted a sophisticated way which, at the same time, involved them approaching each other. And so I had this idea to make this game. But that's all. It doesn't go any further.

KC - Jack Taylor, who was in that film, and I spoke briefly the other day. He has very high praise for you - both as one of your actors and as a friend ...

JF - He didn't want to make my latest film. I called him to play a part but he didn't want to do that.

KC - How long ago was this?

JF - Three months ago... ?

KC - He didn't even mention that to me. We were speaking about two weeks ago and, as impressed as he is with you as a friend and with your talents, he is to this day befuddled by your working habits. So much must have been going on that he couldn't even remember the titles of films in which he appeared. He'd remember going to certain countries but he was hard-pressed for details. Is that common for your actors or is that just Jack?

JF - No. You know very well that I like Jack. Jack is not an actor who can play any part in the world. He's sort of a special type. But I like him to play a lot of things. You know what happened? Jack Taylor was originally a sculptor. An American sculptor who came to Spain to look for the arts and Spanish painters and sculptors. And then he decided to stay. In the States, incidentally, I think he played a couple of very small parts in independent films in California. And when he arrived in Spain, after a while he needed money. It was the times of the co-productions, so he found someone who said, "Listen, you could play a small part..." and he agreed right away. At that point Lesocur appeared in his life. He offered him a contract to play a part in a western. And Jack said,

"Yes, I can do this, for sure." And he let Lesœur choose a name. But this Lesœur, the father, is a very strange guy. The son is very clear but the father is a very strange man. And he said the name Taylor sounds like someone from a family of tailors, [laughs] "Can you imagine the name of Taylor!" It's like here, if the name is García [laughs], it means nothing. But Jack Taylor became Jack Taylor because his real name, the real name of Jack Taylor, is George Burns...²

KC - Which he obviously couldn't use...

JF - Yes... no, of course! So this little role for Jack Taylor was good for him and he started making pictures. I was in good relations at that time with Lesœur and he introduced me to Jack. I liked the idea to use him because he was a very nice person too, no? When I had the chance to make **NECRONOMICON** the Germans wanted Adrian Hoven to play that part. But for obvious reasons - the same as I had with Diana Lorys - I didn't feel he was right for the part. So I said to the one associate - the one with very real personal class from a very aristocratic family in Germany - I said, "Adrian - I love him - but he cannot play this part. This part needs someone with an air of personal class." So they tell me okay, but that I'd have to find someone immediately because otherwise by the next week Adrian Hoven would be playing the part. So I spent the whole night racking my brain, "God, who can I get?" And suddenly Jack Taylor came to me. I called Jack and Jack came to Lisbon, where we were, within one day and they all agreed and said he was perfect for the part. And he played it very well. He was fantastic. We had a very good collaboration between us and everything. And then we made some films together; he was also involved with me in art direction. He's very clever and very good in all the arts. We made together, for instance, **THE BLOODY JUDGE** - the film I made with Christopher. Jack was the art director and he was very good. Then he became... it happened, like... We always say this about Francisco Rabal [laughs]. We say, "Now he's getting too much like an intellectual, this guy!" It's because he was in Argentina, in Buenos Aires. It's a very bad to go to Buenos Aires because there's a lot of intellectual people there and they can destroy you. You know? [laughs] He was very unhappy. But the same thing happened to me with Jack Taylor. Not because he went to Argentina but because Argentina came to him when he started to work with Actors Studio, learning expressions and things, making esoteric and very intellectual and "essential" theatre and I don't know-what! And they got an offer from a very intellectual Spanish director making his first and his last picture. And Jack started to take himself too seriously. And from that point on, to me, he was much more distant. And once, about four or five years ago, I offered him a part and he was too pre-occupied because he had to give a monologue in some Roman theatre in I-don't-know-where. And then I met him a couple of times during this last program at the Spanish Filmoteca... and found him back from the clouds. So I decided to offer him a part again but he decided he didn't want to play that anyway! [laughs] But I like him very much and I think that is a nice story about him and me.

KC - Speaking of stories, there's long been a rumor which has either been substantiated or fraudulently supported by what I'm going to show you: the legend of a possible different ending shot for **NECRONOMICON**. Here it is in the first issue of "Video Watchdog": some panels from an Italian photocomic. Were those scenes ever shot?

JF - [takes magazine and closely inspects the panels] I haven't seen this before. Have you seen this?

KC - Never on film, only in print. I've seen different cuts of the film before, but never with that.

JF - Not with this. Yes, it's because I really believe - though I never took it seriously before - that the Italians... this is Italian, right? [looks back at the language in the magazine] Si... make kind of comic strips. Completely mad, half porno. And when they do it about films they add drawings and photos and things from other pictures to make it more romantic or more salacious or more erotic or something. And I really believe that this is not from a version which we shot.

KC - So that ends that.

JF - The man who owns the worldwide rights of the film is a very serious man and he would never accept this. He loves the film. He still really loves the film and now hopes to make a new presentation of **NECRONOMICON**, re-releasing it with new posters and the like. This man is called Dieter Mentz from Atlas International in Munich. He saw the first copy of the picture at the Berlin Film Festival. He immediately bought the rights to the film for the whole world. And he still has them. He would never accept this kind of thing. I'm sure this is just Italian fantasy.

KC - So the only ending of the film is the familiar one with Lorna Green (Janine) returning to the castle?

JF - Yes.

KC - Does **NECRONOMICON**'s Lorna Green have any connection to the Lorna Green in **LES POSSEDEES DU DIABLE**?

JF - The idea. The idea.

KC - But it's not supposed to be the same person - I don't mean the same actresses, obviously no one would ever confuse Janine Raymond and Pamela Stanford ...

JF - No. It was kind of an homage.

KC - Okay. As we discussed briefly before, right after **NECRONOMICON** Janine appeared in the two "Red Lips" films with Rossana Yanni.

JF - Si. Rossana Yanni was fantastic to play this. Much better than Janine. Because Rossana Yanni is a real comedienne and she plays very funny. And Janine was not a comedienne. She was a model, a high fashion model, a top model of Jean Paul Gaultier - who's considered even now as one of the top elegant fashion houses in Paris.

KC - And comedy is one of the things that's very difficult...

JF - It's the most difficult thing to play: comedy.

KC - Which is why you've been so lucky with Lina.

JF - Yes, oh yes... [looks appreciatively to Lina]

KC - This wasn't the first of the "Red Lips" films but these two films certainly are the hub of the *Labios Rojos* series. In addition to these you have a lot of films where the main stars are two women, usually two dancers, or strippers, or nightclub performers ...

JF - Yeah... [laughs]... besides being spies!

KC - Right! What is the fascination you have for two women being the protagonists in your films?

JF - The same as it is for you! Because I think two beautiful girls is very different. Eh? (Two girls) taking the part of Lemmy Caution or Mike Hammer is much more interesting

for a normal audience, no? That's all. It's very simple. Because I had the idea to have two characters which are very different from each other. One is completely out of her mind and she's ready to do anything the other one tells her to do. If she says, "Listen, go to the home of this man, you kill his wife, and then you make love to him." She'll say [very daintily] "Oh, okay!" And she'll put on her makeup and off she goes! And the other is the brain. But the brain gets involved. She's not as unconscious as the funny one. She gets involved and she falls in love. And she winds up doing silly things because she immediately gets involved with everything. I think this "joke" on the characters is very nice. It can be very funny. And I am not very happy about any of those "Red Lips" films. [laughs] Because I never had a good couple! I'd have the one ... two or three times I had one who was fantastic and the other was not. You know? So in these two films I didn't like Janine Reynaud. She's no good. And she knows that she's no good and that she made them because of the money. But she was not involved in the story, nothing. Because it was impossible for her. In the first "Red Lips" [LABIOS ROJOS, 1960 - ed.] I had Anna Castor, a blonde who was great because she was exactly like the character. But the other one ... ni, ni, ni, ni! Nothing! [Suzanne Medel - ed.] And then, in the last version we made, Lina was great but the other girl was kind of stupid. She was an actress from Belgium and...

KC - That would be Karin Dior in 1986's *LA CHICA DE LOS LABIOS ROJOS*?

JF - Si, si. She never got the idea of the thing. She never understood anything.

LR - Don't forget *LES GRANDES EMMERDEUSES*...

JF - Ah, yes. But it's not the same couple. It's not the same thing.

KC - Those weren't the "Red Lips" team...

JF - No, no.

KC - That was almost the same type of situation.

JF - Yeah, but that was just a sexy film. There was something that was more ironic or funny with the "Red Lips".

KC - I thought *LES GRANDES EMMERDEUSES* was funny. I thought that entire film was hilarious. I really enjoyed that film.

JF - [Incredulous] Yeah? The one with Pamela Stanford and Lina?

KC - Yes.

JF - I think it's funny but they're not the same characters. Do you believe they are the same? There's not the same contrast.

KC - Obviously there is no direct connection to the "Red Lips". You said that you always wanted one of the "Red Lips" to be the smart one and one to be the funny one. I think in *LES GRANDES EMMERDEUSES* they were both kind of funny. And sexy!

JF - Yes. Both funny and sexy and no brain at all!

LR - Campy!

KC - Well, maybe one brain between them.

JF - [makes slicing motion as if cutting something in half] Yes! Maybe one brain between them! But I think I like this

thing because the idea of making comedies with sexy girls... Many times we saw couples like Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, and a lot of men. Why always men? I like women more than men.

KC - Hey, I agree with you.

JF - So I think my point of view is that if you could get a real good couple of comedienne it would be a fantastic proposal.

KC - Is it really that difficult? Because Lina and I were discussing this earlier today. Is it difficult to find women who are really beautiful and who are really funny? I don't know if it is difficult, I just know that you rarely see it in the movies.

JF - Yes it is. And, also, here you'd have to find two together.

KC - That makes it doubly difficult.

JF - In this sense Rossana Yanni and Janine Reynaud were nice to look at. But one of them was completely out of the comedy business.

KC - If you had to pick your perfect team of "Red Lips" - culling from any actresses out of any time period - who would it be?

JF - Out of any time period?

KC - Yes, if you were picking your ideal "Red Lips" team.

JF - [rubs his brow and takes time to ponder] Also it's a matter of fitting together because Rossana Yanni is a very tall girl. She's very big. And Janine Reynaud was not so big, but almost, and with her shoes she was as big as her. But looking at the funny side, in principal, from their work... who I would like to use from the past should be Debbie Reynolds and Raquel Welch.

KC - Ooo-kay...

JF - [smiles] And to equate that pair in Europe and from my films, it would probably be Lina and... [pauses again to think] probably Caroline Munro should be with her.

KC - Interesting.

JF - Caroline Munro is very funny. She has a good sense of humor. She's very nice looking and a good actress. And very different, eh?

KC - So which one for which part?

JF - This one is the brains, of course, Lina. And the other one is, you know, [looks around as if empty-headed]... You know, Dr. Frankenstein and the monster! [laughs] And also I know Caroline Munro can be very funny playing stupid. Very sexy but stupid. [imitates empty-headed look again] Like that! She should be very good I think.

KC - Another set-piece that's common in your films is the cabaret scenes. We've seen the "Red Lips" perform, there was an intricate piece of performance art in *MISS MUERTE*, Lina has done a lot of different numbers, and the list goes on...

JF - Yeah, si, si, si.

KC - Would any of these performers have been capable cabaret artists on their own? In other words, was there any real cabaret talent there or were these acts entirely out of your own imagination and choreography?

JF - No, not really. None of them were cabaret performers or from shows. No, they were actors and I directed them. In my past - my complicated past - I was a jazz trumpeter, as I told you. But, for money. I had to play in nightclubs and cabarets. We had a couple of combos, in Spain mainly; and then some in Paris. The one in Paris was a very different combo. In Spain I had two combos which were young people playing jazz and loving jazz music. But we had to play music other than jazz in ballrooms and nightclubs. So we made a very commercial kind of jazz and we were also involved in some of those nightclub shows. I spent almost a couple of years of my life at that young age doing this and I was introduced to a lot of things for the first time. You know, playing with singers and dancers and balladeers and things in different nightclubs. Most of the times those shows were very bad and very nasty. But while I was playing I'd be thinking, "Why doesn't that dancer to that, that, or that? She'd be very good! Why doesn't this idiot do that, that, and that?" So this gave birth to my opinions on how to drive a nightclub show: to be nice, to be sexy, but at the same time to sustain a certain class. Finally, I worked with a couple of South American people who were very good. Very good showgirls and showmen. And I formed the basis of the shows in my films from those guys. I started as a director a long time afterwards but these things remained in my mind. For me, a nightclub is a normal place where these strange things can happen.

KC - I'd like to see some of those nightclubs where some of your acts happened.

JF - [laughs]

KC - So do you normally choreograph?

JF - Yes.

KC - Everything comes from you?

JF - Yes, yes.

KC - For instance, the truly odd nightclub act of Estella Blaine in *MISS MUERTE*?

JF - Yes, yes. One hundred percent.

KC - Was that particular act - or any act, I guess - based on anything or is it entirely from your imagination?

JF - My imagination. It doesn't come from anything.

KC - Speaking of Estella Blaine, she died in 1981...

JF - Killed herself.

KC - The odd thing about her in regards to

her work with you is that, very often, a female would do a series of films with you - two or three in a row. But Estella, as startling as she was in *MISS MUERTE*, never appeared again in any of your films.

JF - Estella Blaine made just the one film with me and she was very good, I think. [somberly] She was a very sensitive person. She had a lot of problems, a lot of personal problems. Yes. With her husband. Then she divorced him but then he took the child they had together and such things. Some months later, after our film, I met her in Paris and we were having dinner together with the manager of production of this film. We were sitting together talking about her situation. Then later, when we were alone - this guy Eric Geiger and myself - I said, "She is destroyed." After all her earlier troubles she was now troubled again. Because in one moment of her life she became devoted to a jazz piano player - quite a brilliant guy and a very sweet man... but suddenly this man let her down and she was really desperate when we found her. And we tried to help her when we met her. I prepared a film and we called Estella and... [pauses as voice chokes] ... ten or fifteen days later she killed herself. She couldn't resist it. She was completely alone in the world. No first husband. No second husband. No child. And she was drinking. I'm sure she was completely drunk when she killed herself. [teary-eyed] It's a pity because she was a very sensitive woman. Very clever.

KC - What a very sad and tragic story. I wasn't aware of all of the circumstances. You obviously took a keen personal interest and truly cared for your performers as people...

JF - [silently composes himself]

KC - You had a whole group of actresses who were seemingly in and out of every film in the early '70s: Alice Arno, Kali Hansa, Monica Swinn, Britt Nichols, Emma Cohen....

JF - One film. Emma Cohen was in one film.*

KC - Emma Cohen? Oh, right. Just in *EL OTRO LADO DEL ESPEJO*... but the list goes on... Britt Nichols, Anne Libert, and so on. Were they under contract to you?

JF - No. [chuckles] I will tell you. Britt Nichols was a brilliant comedienne in operettas in Lisbon. I saw her acting and I thought she was beautiful. I spoke with her, asked her if she would like to work with me; and she was very happy and so...



"okay!" And she started to work with me. She was Portuguese so we worked together only when I was in Portugal because the rest of the time she was always performing in the same theater. But she was a case a little bit like Soledad, that one. As I said, in this thing like... [points to his head] ... pffft! ... no idea about anything. But the results were very good. But she found an Argentinian football player. She fell in love with him and she disappeared. This is a very funny story. About six or eight months after my last picture with her, Roman Polanski contacted me from Rome because he wanted her to play the main part in ... how do you say it? [looks to Lina]

LR - CHE?

JF - Que?

KC - WHAT?

LR - Si, CHE?, WHAT?

JF - WHAT?, si.

KC - Okay, that was confusing enough. That would be the part that *Sydney Rome* wound up playing?

JF - Sydney Rome, si. And he said, "Ah, I'm so glad I found you," because I had met him before. He called me, as a matter of fact, because he wanted (Britt's) address. So I said, "Listen, I can give you the address, the telephone number, everything. But I don't believe she is still living in the same place because now she's with that football player. And this football player probably doesn't allow her to act anymore." But Roman said, "Maybe for a small part but this is for the main part in this picture. This is an American co-production. This will make her a star because she is great and she is wonderful!" And he asked me, "is she able to speak English?" And I said, "She is able to speak nothing!" [laughs] "I don't care. I don't care. We will dub her!" As you know, in Italy in that period mostly everybody was dubbed. No one actually spoke. It was ... not "silent" ...

KC - ...shot without sound...

JF - Si! So I said, "If you want, I will try to find her. I will tell her to call you."

I posed this to her and she said, "No. It's not interesting to me because my man doesn't want me acting in cinema. He wants me at home and taking care of things."

I asked her if she completely understood.

She said, "Yes, yes, I understand."

But she didn't understand, no! Finally I called Polanski back and said, "Listen, try if you wish, but her answer is 'no'." So this is the Britt Nichols' story.

Which other ones did you ask? Oh, Emma Cohen. Emma Cohen is a friend. She is the wife of a good friend of mine and she's a very good actress - obviously - and she played that part because it was very good for her. Anne Libert was a French actress who was in the first sexy films made by French guys in Paris before the beginning of porno in France. She was very good. I was making films with a producer called Robert de Nesle of Comptoir Francais du Film and he told her to call me because maybe we could give her some parts. She agreed immediately and we were working together for a while or so. She got in contact with this producer and he gave her a contract for a number of films - eight, ten films - and we made the films. And then she went to Italy to play in a couple of films and then she disappeared. And then, in Paris again, I met her and... You remember how she had such beautiful hair?

KC - Yes, that long dark hair...

JF - Now - when I met her again - she was like me [pointing to his own short hair]. Because in the latest Italian film she did they made her blonde. And you know she'd had black hair like that! [points to black bookcover on table] And they had to do the preparations three or four times to get the blonde color and then all her hair began falling out. She said, "Look at that..." [pulls out some imaginary hair] She was also very, very unhappy. But then I know she is still working making a regular career, not very important. I think her personality was in the face and the hair ... both very beautiful. And now she doesn't have any hair. Just wigs.

KC - I never realized that's how she wound up. I read a story in *Tohills and Tombs* "Immoral Tales" which said that Anne had become so adverse to appearing in erotic films that she began to dye her pubic hair different colors so that producers couldn't add inserts later on.

JF - No? I never heard this... [leans forward] Tell me more.

KC - You never heard this?

JF - No, no, no.

KC - She said that she wanted to make sure no one added hard-core inserts to her films. She knew that no actress was going to go through the trouble and bother of dying her pubic hair just to do an insert so she dyed her own to foil the producers.

JF - [rubs his forehead and smiles] This is the first time I ever heard that. It's nice. It's a nice story.

KC - Well, it's an interesting story... if it's true.

JF - Anne Libert, eh? I don't think so. Anne Libert didn't care about this kind of thing.

KC - Well don't confuse me now. I'm working without a net when I'm relying on my memory. It might have been Britt Nichols but I'm pretty sure it was Anne Libert. [with some doubt] Right?

JF - Britt Nichols? No.

KC - Yeah, Anne Libert. I'm sure. Don't force me to think. I'm working off the top of my head and the thought process doesn't go very deep.

JF - Okay. Anne Libert!

KC - Thank you.

JF - Kali Hamsa. Let's talk about Kali Hamsa. Kali Hamsa was a Cuban girl. Very nice. Also a model. And I met her because she was the girlfriend of Alberto Dalbes - the Argentinean actor who played in a lot of my films. Alberto introduced her to me saying, "Listen, let's try to give a part to her. And, of course, she was very nice and played a lot of - well, not a lot, four or five - films with me. And then she went back to Cuba. So she disappeared not only from my films but also from Alberto Dalbes' life!" [laughs] She went back to Cuba because she was against Fidel Castro. But she wanted to be there to fight him because she was a very strong woman. I never heard about her again.

KC - You don't know what happened to her?

JF - No.



*Monica Swinn playing "ugly" in BARBED WIRE
DOLLS*

KC - What about Monica Swinn?

JF - Monica Swinn is a special case. She's a journalist. She's a very nice girl. And sometimes she wanted to play a part and when I was over there in Paris and if there was a chance for her to play in one or two or three films, she did. But she was always involved with other things as a journalist. It was never a clear situation for her. Also, Monica is a brilliant girl and a nice actress. She's a special case, a special kind. In the film called *FRAUENGEGANGNIS* I think she is very good.

KC - As the wardness, yeah.

JF - She's very good. Yeah. And for these kinds of parts she is fantastic. But not for other kinds. Because, as a matter of fact, she is an amateur. She's not a real actress. She's someone who likes movies very much and she knows a lot as a journalist, but her experience in acting is not so great. The problem is the Lesœur brothers ... brothers! ... father and son, really. Normally we call them "The Brothers".

LR - [laughs]

JF - When we say "The Brothers" among my group, we know it's the Lesœur father and son. So the Lesœur brothers used her in a couple of films they made with Alain Paillard or some French director. But she didn't like it because she's an intellectual. She wouldn't want to work with people she didn't

feel were on her same intellectual plane. We met her a couple of years ago ...

LR - ...in Paris.

JF - In Paris, no? And she was working, because she's a journalist, mostly as a writer.

KC - One thing that I admire about her is her willingness to play down her appearance because - and a lot of viewers don't realize this - she is a very attractive woman.

JF - Uh-huh.

KC - She played a lot of - I don't want to say "ugly" - but rather "stern" roles. Wardnesses, housekeepers, and things like that ...

JF - She's very cultivated and she knows a lot about the American "B" films - you know, those "jail" films. And she loves them! So, for her it is a pleasure to play these kinds of parts. And these kinds of things she is able to play very well, you know, in these kinds of "abnormal" films. But if you ask her to play a regular part, say, the mother of Macaulay Culkin, well, she'd be terrible playing that. She doesn't want to play that.

KC - I wouldn't want to play Macaulay Culkin's mother either!

JF - [laughs] No!

KC - Then, of course, the actress who's been with you the longest period of time is Lina ...

JF - Yes.

KC - Where did you first meet Lina?

JF - We met in Mar Menor which is in the province of Murcia in the southeast of Spain, in a fantastic place where I shot a lot of my films.

KC - When Lina first began working with you in small roles, how long did it take before you realized her potential, that she'd be a leading actress?

JF - I had this impression from the beginning but I was sure just when we made "The Comtesse..." [looks to Lina]... what's the full title?

LR - LA COMTESSE PERVERSE...

JF - LA COMTESSE PERVERSE! When she played a real part, eh? And she was as good then as she is now.

KC - Was that film consciously based upon "The Most Dangerous Game"?

JF - No, no. Certainly no. LA COMTESSE PERVERSE came from an idea which, in the beginning, was half of a de Sade and half of a Masoch story. I took from them kinds of ideas floating here and there and then I wrote the complete story myself.

KC - Now I've always seen that film referenced as your own version of either the 1932 film *THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME* or that it was based upon Richard Connell's book. But you say it has no origins at all in either?

JF - Yeah.



Lina perusing some notes on "The Lina Romay File" at home. March 3, 1996.

KC - Okay. With Lina's talent being apparent to you from the very beginning, were you confident giving her the starring role in *LA COMTESSE NOIRE*?

JF - I had no doubts. No. But then, the first time I was one hundred percent sure of Lina's talents was in *CELESTINE, BONNE A TOUT FAIRE*.

KC - When she first had the chance to show off her comic abilities...

JF - She played that very difficult comic role fantastically. Everybody was astonished. Even the French producer didn't like her so much before we filmed but I said, "Listen, she can play this role. I can assure you." And then, when he saw the rushes he was totally happy. And the difference between being Lina and just being a beautiful girl is that Lina has a lot of theatrical information and culture and education in the independent theater. And also an education in an art school. When I met her she was studying in the art school in Barcelona.

LR - But not as an actress!

JF - No, not acting. It was a school for drawing and painting.

KC - How soon after Lina began to work for you did she begin to work with you?

JF - She was interested in editing, for instance. And she came

into the editing room to see how it is done. After a while I began to say to her, "Let's put together this blank." or "Put the unusable material in this box," you know, these little things to do. And then, from there, she started to be my assistant in the editing room. I used to cut my films myself because I don't like to leave it in the hands of someone else. Even if it's a brilliant person. Because I know why and how I shot the film. So I want this like that and not some other way. You know I had a lot of problems with the British editors I had with my British-American films. Not that they weren't brilliant editors but they wanted to edit in their own way. This is stupid. Because you shot something to be cut so and so and so. Why would someone working for you try a different so and so and so? When you are very rich and can afford to shoot one-hundred-thousand meters of negative, then an editor can be helpful to you because you'll have a long sequence and you have to cut half of it and still keep all the elements. Then his skill and advice can help. But when you are only shooting eight thousand meters, which will eventually become three thousand, you know what has to be done before you shoot it.

KC - You'll do a lot of your editing within the camera.

JF - Right! You're editing with the camera. And if someone comes over and decides to edit it a different way, well, I don't want that. You know? So Lina started with me and started to be an assistant. And then one day I said, "Try to put together this sequence." And she knew how to do it, right from the beginning.

KC - She's edited for you, she's directed for you, she's acted in comedies, horrors, erotic films, - you name it. What is her finest talent?

JF - [smiles] I think she likes the cinema. She's able to do a lot of (technical) things. But deep inside she's an actress. And the thing she prefers to do is to play. And for a while she's been working in movies, doing editing, making additions, making soundtracks, and making other things, but if she's not acting, she is not happy. I know it even if she doesn't say it. I know she's very unhappy. Because the one thing that she prefers in the world is to play parts.

KC - She is often referred to as your muse or your inspiration. Have you ever specifically written a film not just with her in mind to play a role but, in effect, created the film for her talents?

JF - Yes, lots of times.

KC - What would some of those be?

JF - Oh, there's lots of them. For instance, *FRAUEN OHNE UNSCHULD*, *CELESTINE*, *BONNE A TOUT FAIRE*, another example, *CHEMIN SOLITAIRE* or *CAMINO SOLITARIO* where she played the two different parts. I knew I was able to do this with her because she could play two different characters that nobody could even recognize before you discover if it's a separate person. And I'll tell you more. The sexy films we made together? For me, nobody in the world can do it but her!

KC - I'd have to agree with you on that.

JF - I tell you, nobody in the world!

KC - Especially, and I keep coming back to this point, for someone to do a sexy scene and to be able to inject comedy into it is really a talent.

JF - Yes, yeah.

KC - It's an extremely unique talent that Lina carries off effortlessly, or seemingly effortlessly, which in itself is yet another talent. How strongly do you have to direct her in a scene?

JF - [sticks out tongue] Pfft! Nothing! We discuss a sequence and we rehearse once. And lots of times she makes inventions. You know, we will be shooting and she will add some details or some ad libs or something.

KC - And you usually accept those?

JF - Ninety-five percent of the time, yes.

KC - Over the last 12 or 15 years or so, besides Lina, your other acting mainstay has become Antonio Mayans.

JF - Yeah.

KC - He's become a very important part of your production team. What exactly is his role, or roles, for you now?

JF - Just now we're not working together. Number one, I had to do **DON QUIXOTE** and I had to stop all the other kinds of work. It was something I was most happy to do. But it was very extensive work I had to do by myself with only a German assistant and Lina. Unfortunately we had no room for Antonio in this thing. And Antonio understood very well because, after all, we are not "married". He knew of my friendship and admiration for Orson and of how important this (project) was to me. So he went on to do his own things: some movies, some theatre. He's a very good actor on the stage. It's my fault but now he prefers the production over the acting. I think acting for him became unfulfilling or "not a complete work". He doesn't feel fulfilled when he acts on the stage or when he plays a part in the Spanish cinema.

KC - When he does work with you what chores does he do?

JF - For me? He was director of production. Taking care of the details and organizing the shooting. Now it's a sad one because he didn't feel as though he was playing a part on the current film, **KILLER BARBYS**. I met Antonio back when he was playing in the Nicholas Ray film... the story of Jesus Christ?

KC - **KING OF KINGS**.

JF - Yes, I think so. And Antonio played the part of St. John in the film. Very well, too, I think. I met him during this time because I was very good friends with Nicholas Ray. And so he made a cameo part in a film for me, or something, and then we stayed in contact more or less. Once I gave him a part in a second film and the guy who was manager of production did something very nasty and I fired him. And so I was alone - out of Barcelona and out of money. Antonio came to me and said, "If you need help, I think I have a lot of experience in cinema - not just acting. I like to watch everything that's happening and I feel I can help you. Just tell me." And so I agreed and he started to help me. And he did very well. And with the next film I said, "Do you still want to help me?" "Si." And it was just like that for forty films or something like that - films that we made together.

KC - Does he still act under the name of Robert Forster?

JF - Actually no, we used that name because it was a good sounding name. But after a few films I found out that there was another actor by the same name. So we stopped using it. My Robert Forster, Antonio, is a very, very good actor. One of the very best, I think.

KC - He definitely seems to be able to play virtually any type of role. He's especially funny in his comical "gay" roles - although I'm sure that's not very politically correct. And he makes a wonderful hero and a fine sniveling villain too.

JF - He's wonderful every time.

KC - So between all that Lina does for you and all that Antonio can do for you, you have a crew of about 20 people in just two people.

JF - Yeah!

LR - [laughs] Si!

KC - That's a pretty good deal.

JF - It's fantastic. You know, my ideal is the smallest efficient crew possible. And you don't know the whole story. For instance, you told me yesterday that you have seen my film **¿CUANTO COBRA UN ESPÍA?** How did you find the guy playing the husband of Lina?

LR - Juan Cozar.

KC - I thought he was very funny.

JF - That's Juan Soler Cozar! And he's the director of photography too.

KC - So he worked as both on that film?

JF - Yes! He's played lots of parts for me. And very well. Because he's got a natural beautiful face to play a stupid guy. [makes a funny face] Like that!

KC - Well, I didn't want to say that...

JF - [laughs] Yes! No, I suppose that doesn't sound very nice but he's got a great sense of humor. He's a very nice musician too. He's a guitar player.

KC - Which we've seen him do a few times in your films. He played the role of the guitar-playing mute in **GEMIDOS DE PLACER** - a role based upon Lina's character in **PLAISIR A TROIS**. If that's actually him playing the guitar, he plays very well.

JF - He's a very nice one. And this guy likes very much to be the director of photography while playing a part at the same time. Otherwise, he's bored. He's very active and a nice guy. He's a guy from Barcelona. Juan Soler Cozar speaks fluently in four or five languages. He's a very cultured man. He's played a lot of parts in my films. And always very well... very, very well, fantastic! He's got a good memory which helps him to memorize the lines and things. Very professional. So, I've had Antonio, her [points to Lina], and my director of photography. So I could complete one of my crews with, let's say, just five more people.

LR - And Angel.

JF - And Angel! He's another one. He's a man you've seen in my films, for sure, with a beard out like that - looking like a very Spanish guy with dark hair. [Angel Ordiales - ed.]

KC - What would be the smallest crew you've ever used?

JF - The smallest? Let's see... I did the direction of photography myself in the "Usher" film. So, one - I had an assistant for the camera. I had someone for the makeup - two. I had Mayans - three. I had one more, more or less, for props and



*Caroline Munro is about to discover the joys of
FACELESS.*

things. And Lina. That makes four or five. Five people.

KC - And you said last night that the biggest crew was on *JUSTINE*?

JF - The biggest, yes? 120 people. An enormous crew in *JUSTINE*. A big film. Oh, my God.

KC - How many people worked on *FACELESS*?

JF - Too many! [laughs] *FACELESS* had like at least 50 technicians. I didn't want this. I said to him [producer Rene Chateau - ed.], "Why the hell do you want so many people doing nothing? Just entering the shot when they don't have to?" But he had the mentality or the intention to become a big French producer, to be associated with Jean Paul Belmondo. *FACELESS* was the first film he produced on his own and he wanted Belmondo to bear about this enormous crew. Very chic, you know, this kind of thing. But it wasn't very useful for getting the work done because I didn't need so many people.

KC - With all this money and bloat behind it, you still have no idea why the film has never been released theatrically or on video in the States?

JF - I don't understand it. I don't understand. Maybe it is because they asked for too much money. Don't forget that Rene Chateau is a very rich man. He doesn't need the money. It's easy to make a deal with someone when he needs to be

paid, when he doesn't have enough money to eat and he needs to be paid. But with Rene Chateau that's not the case.

KC - Chateau's got enough money that, if someone doesn't meet his price, he can just walk away?

JF - Yeah. He will wait and release it some other day. Probably. He never told me this, of course. But the company who has the rights to the world sales had someone to buy the film in Spain - offering 5 million pesetas, which meant about \$50,000.00 at that time, roughly. I said, "Don't sell it for 5 million pesetas. Very easily you will get 10 million for your film." And Rene Chateau told me, "Okay, you have two months to see if you can improve that deal." And in less than two months we had a contract for 10 million. Just double what the world sellers offered. So maybe it's just angling for a position, be-

cause the seller of this film is a big company in Paris which has got the rights to most of these U.G.C. films - you know, they are marked in French "U.G.C." - and they own a lot of theaters in Paris. They're active with "Le Monde", which is a big company. They make a lot of films, they co-produce, et cetera. And so this guy, the seller, has too much work. If Rene Chateau told him, "I want \$250,000.00 or nothing," well, if someone asks to buy it, he's going to ask for \$250,000.00 or nothing. He's too busy to bother to bargain. [laughs] So that's it, all or nothing.

KC - Have you any more films planned with Chateau?

JF - No, no. Because Chateau wanted to produce two more films with me but suddenly he discovered a gold mine. The gold mine is that he bought the rights to a lot of legendary old French films. Through one agent they found out that these old companies had disappeared. Maybe there was just an old woman left who was the cousin of I-don't-know-whom, ready to sell the rights of Marcel Carne films or Jean Renoir films of the thirties. You know, Michel Simon or Jean-Luc Godard, eh? Ready to sell for almost nothing. So Rene Chateau bought about 150 rights to these kinds of films. And then he started to promote them as not very expensive but beautiful video tapes. And he's making such a big business that he doesn't want to bear anything about any other matters except his "Classique French Cinema Collection." But we are very friendly. He's a very smart guy. Very nice. He's got nothing to argue against. I got all the elements I needed for my film with no problem at all. The proof of it is the cast of the film - which is great and fantastic.

KC - How many films would you now guess that you've directed since 1959? Not counting earlier documentaries.



*Charlie Chaplin Jr. on the set of **KILLER BARBYS**.*

JF - [stops to think]

KC - Or do you have to guess? Do you know?

JF - I know it's about 160. Maybe not yet 160. Maybe 158 or something like that.

KC - And you want to make 100 more?

JF - Yes. I want to.

KC - Do you think you'll be able to do it?

JF - Yes. I think so.

KC - Wouldn't you agree though that it is more difficult now to make films at the rate to which you're accustomed?

JF - Life is funny. If you asked me that question a couple of years ago I am sure I should tell you, "I don't know, everything has changed." But now everything is coming back, you know, slowly falling into place as if there was a break in the socialist's laws. And now it's re-happening as it did before. And something very funny is happening. Now I am becoming one of the favorite directors for the young generation. They love my films and they come to me and they ask me, "Please, I want to learn cinema with you!" And it's unbelievable. I don't take it seriously because I know life is funny and this is just one more element. The thing is, now groups of young people ask me to make clips for them and they offer me to make films with them. I will show you... the guy who's the editor of "Dos Cities" wants to produce films for the first time. Films with me! But which kind of films? My films! They want my films. They don't want me doing other things. They want me doing erotic-borror or black cinema. Exactly the things that they like from my films and that I like to do too.

KC - For which we've been starving a long time. It's been so long, with the tentative exception of *FACELESS*, which has some of your elements but was not "pure, essential Franco"...

JF - It was a compromise. A compromise because it was a French film with a big distribution deal and with an exhibition deal with the most important theaters in Paris. So we had to be careful not to go too far, because otherwise everything would be lost. I understood this arrangement from the beginning and I accepted it. But it's not a real horror film, it's a thriller. A thriller. Now people like to say, "thriller." [smiles]

KC - Were there any parts in *FACELESS* where you wanted to go further, or even too far?

JF - Yes. In the horror sequences. And also in the part of Orloff. I wanted to make that longer.

KC - Howard Vernon and Lina's scene...

JF - Yes. I wanted him to be the man who discovered what was going on in the clinic.

KC - You wanted the evil doctor to be the hero?

JF - Yes. And Orloff, don't forget, as I said, the bad heroes, the villains in my films have a nice side. Orloff fits this because he believes he is doing something good for the people. And he would have exposed the evil going on if I had done the version I wanted to do. But Rene Clateau didn't want to. He said that I could work on the script to bring in more elements that I liked but I couldn't change the scheme or the base of the relationships between the characters. So Orloff had to remain out. No. In the end I had the idea to put Orloff in because it was funny, you know.

KC - Ironic.

JF - Yes.

KC - So now, with the films you are beginning, you will have a definite return to erotic horror?

JF - Yes, yes.

KC - You're working on a new film now. Or at least planning one for after the release of *KILLER BARBYS*?

JF - Yes.

KC - Could you give us the basic plot of the next one without giving anything away?

JF - Hmmm. This next film will be the story of two old men, who are very old. They start a relationship through the computer...

LR - On the internet.

JF - Si, si... the internet, yes. They each discover that the other has an awful past as a killer. And they decide to meet and work together. And these two old people finally meet: a German one and a Spanish one who is much more stupid than the first fellow. And they go together on holidays and they start to kill everybody - because that's the way they find their fun and happiness. And they will kill, I don't know, fifty persons in two days.

KC - Very efficient.

LR - [laughs] Yes!

JF - I will have to work on the erotic elements though.

KC - Now **KILLER BARBYS** is scheduled for a May release in Madrid and then it will go out through all of Spain?

JF - Yes.

KC - And the name **KILLER BARBYS** is derived from the band, *Killer Barbies* - a very popular Spanish group - which, in turn, is named after the Barbie dolls?

JF - Yes. And the dolls appear in the film. Not the real Barbie dolls but a sexy version of the dolls.

KC - Making mothers happy all over the world...

JF - [laughs] Yes. I hope so.

KC - With this infusion of interest from your younger fans it looks as though you will be able to go on making your films.

JF - Yes... "Caspa" films.

KC - Excuse me?

JF - "Caspa" films. It's funny. When we started to put together a still at the end of the film, the crew began to shout all together, "Caspa! Caspa! Caspa!" You know, *caspa* is an expression we use in Spain. I don't know how you'd translate *caspa* into English. But you'll see some guys who have dirty hair and they'll be wearing a suit jacket like yours and on their shoulders will be some kind of powder...

KC - Dandruff?

JF - How do you call it?

KC - Dandruff. Like white flakes...

JF - Yeah, so *caspa* means dandruff. So I said this guy, this dead guy, in the still, is the dandruff guy. Because that means everything to us [laughs]. No? You have to understand that this kind of person can be called that here, *caspa*. And so they decided that our style of films will be called "caspa films" or "dandruff films". I like it as an expression and at the end of the shoot they made a kind of homage to me shouting, "Caspa! Caspa!" And **KILLER BARBYS** is now the beginning of the era of "Caspa" films in Spain.

KC - There is a very familiar face in the film, an actress who I believe is making her first appearance in one of your films ...

JF - Do you know the actress Mariangela Giordano? The Italian actress? She's played in almost one hundred films with people like Margheriti, Fulci, and Sorvi ...

KC - I remember her from *LA BIMBI DI SATANA*...

HG - And **ZOMBI HORROR**... [BURIAL GROUND - ed.]

JF - She plays a very important part here.

KC - I don't mean to abruptly change the subject, but I'm looking at the script here and I notice that it's partly in Spanish and partly in English. Is this just the shooting script?

JF - No. I like to take risks - I don't know why - but it happened. We made the script like **COLORS**, the Dennis Hopper film. The characters were both American and Spanish. Sometimes, as in real life, they speak in English and, when they are just around other Spanish people, they speak in Spanish. I



"Caspa! Caspa! Caspa!" - The still which inspired the chant. From **KILLER BARBYS**.

made this the same way. And when the different people are together they speak in a mix of languages so they can best understand each other.

KC - Is there enough of either so that anybody from either language can understand what's going on?

JF - Yes. This was done so that we would have one single version of the film. Some of the dubbing can be avoided by having everybody trying to communicate - in a natural way - so that English and Spanish speaking audiences can understand. I don't always want to be, you know, out of the affairs of the different versions.

KC - As it used to be...

JF - Yes. The way it used to be. This keeps my intentions in both the English and Spanish versions. So, at least we now have the Spanish and English versions all together.

KC - In one! So even if they do want to do any dubbing, they'd only have to dub half - or even less than half - of the film. Though ultimately, if you are successful, no dubbing should be necessary.

JF - In Spain you won't have to dub. They can just subtitle



*Santiago Segura with Jess Franco on the set of
KILLER BARBYS.*

the English. In England and America, the other way around: just subtitle the Spanish. And sometimes they speak two languages like I said. [laughs] Yes! Because they want to be understood. You'll hear them say to someone, "Hello. *Hola!*" You know, like that. You know who did this before? It was in **PLAYTIME** by Jacques Tati. Do you know Jacques Tati, a great director of comic films?

KC - Of MR. HULOT'S HOLIDAY?

JF - Yes. And the film I am talking about is **PLAYTIME** [1968] and the characters say things like, "Hello, comment vas-tu? Are you all right?" [laughs]

KC - Mixing the English and the French.

JF - Si, English and the French. It's difficult to do but Santiago Segura, this great actor, made it in such a way in **KILLER BARBYS** that is marvelous and much more funny. He'll shout, "¡Los Chiquillos! The Kids! Right? See here. [points to script]

"¿Paedo? Mr. Arcan, may I?"

"Be my guest." Because Arcan is English.

And here:

"For los chiquillos, for the hoys... they like ears!"

Because he just cut off an ear. You see?

KC - Sounds interesting.

JF - So the dialog is very simple most of the time. It's only

when the sequence is a dialog sequence all in one language where we will have to do a lot of subtitling. You know, when the language of the people speaking is all English or all Spanish.

KC - Can you fill us in on the story?

JF - It's a woman living in a castle in a lonely place in Spain - in the middle of nowhere. She lives just with her secretary - who is the Aldo Serbelli character you saw in the trailer, the one with the black hat. And she, the woman, is 200 years old. She originally was a very famous singer, not an opera singer but she sang *copla* [Sp. - popular song - ed.], funny tunes of her times. Kind of like, let's say, Mae West.

KC - A cabaret singer by any strange coincidence?

JF - Yes! But 200 years old. And she keeps getting more and more tired and decrepit. And at these moments when she is almost dying, her secretary has to look for young blood for her to drink. As she gets more blood she becomes young again.

KC - Ah, almost taking from the Elizabeth Bathory theme of a woman regaining her youth through the blood of young people?

JF - Yeah. And when she drinks another cup of blood it doesn't cure her but she will stay younger and alive for a while, let's say six months. And this secretary, when she is dying, looks for young people whom he attacks. And the Killer Barbies

come along and he looks at them and sees they are young and strong and full of energy. So he takes them, invites them to the castle to try and kill them. So this picture, I think, is all right. Because it is presented in a classical way but these people are not old and stogy. You have a group of rock and rollers.

KC - You're bringing the rock and roll element into the traditional setting of the horror film; not just juxtaposing one element against the other but blending them together.

JF - Yeah, that's the thing.

KC - Now Silvia Superstar - the lead singer of the Killer Barbies - is very attractive. She reminds me a little of Lina in one of her Candy Coster outfits. What does she play in the film?

JF - She plays the main girl in the film. Herself.

KC - And the old woman in the castle?

JF - Another countess! The Countess von Fledermaus. This is the Italian actress Mariangela Giordano. And the rock and roll group, the real Killer Barbies, is only Silvia Superstar and the drummer. The other people are played by Charlie Chaplin - again! - who even plays the guitar very well and the piano - and this other guy, Carlos Subterfuge, who is the editor of a magazine I want to show you, is also a very good actor. He's in the real band and also plays the guitar. And another one is an actress who's also a dancer. You saw her in the clip.

KC - The girl in the black bikini outfit?

JF - Yes, the girl who is dancing at the very beginning of the song "Love Killer". A very pretty girl.

KC - I'll say.

HG - Definitely.

JF - So the film is done well even if, in fact, we have only just two from the band, Silvia and the drummer. The others didn't act in the film but they are not actors anyway and they don't know the angles of how to make a good performance.

KC - Understandable...to me. They had no problem with that?

JF - Well, deep inside, I think so. But it didn't work out for them. But the actors we have are great. Santiago Segura is a very clever man. He is used by the secretary to kill people. He's kind of a mad guy and he kills them to keep Mariangela alive. I think it should be very good. It's also funny. I'm not saying it's like something from Ealing Studios in England. No. It's not that way. It's a horror film! It's horror but with some elements of comedy in the horror.

KC - That's the way it started out at Universal. They had to put some comic relief into those old "Frankensteins" and "Draculas" because they believed the horror was too intense. Unfortunately, of late, the comedy has tended to override the horror in films, basically ruining them for true horror fans.

JF - Yes, that started with Abbott and Costello. But you know, I always try to inject a little bit of humor into my things.

KC - Humor in anything is fine when it flows naturally. I'm just not a big fan of it when it is forced into a scene or when a scene is unnecessarily played with tongue-in-cheek.

JF - Yeah. Natural. Like I said before, no matter how horrible a time you are having, you can always find something nice or

funny. If you look, it is there. Don't add something that's not there already.

KC - So what are the chances of KILLER BARBIES making its way into theaters in the States?

JF - I think it will be there. Because the people who are selling the film are very strong. They took the film immediately to sell it throughout the world. They are the same company that sells the Almodovar films. Now it's fantastic. And I'll tell you frankly, for me, it's a surprise. It's so wonderful that I really don't believe it yet. Because Canal+ wants the film. They will show the film. The company who is going to show the film in theaters is the best in Spain. With world sales, the same: the best. Everybody wants my films now! They same films that nobody wanted two years ago. (laughs) They want them now. Desperately.

KC - Perhaps it's because they are finally finding your films in something approximating their intended format. Your reputation has certainly been enhanced by having these films shown - even on video - in a proper format and in their original languages.

JF - Which is one of the reasons I so much want to keep KILLER BARBIES in its original languages so they don't have to change it. You know, it was very difficult to get a sound technician who understood both Spanish and English well enough to control the dialog. But there was a reason for it and I think it was worth it. But, you know, for me, my sudden renaissance is a surprise because it's the first time I've ever had this feeling of acceptance. Everyday is a surprise. [to Lina] Can you hand me "El Tiempo"? ... This is sort of like the "Newsweek" of Spain. This is this week's issue. [Lina hands magazine to K.C. folded open to a prominent article]

KC - Well, look who it is! And since I can't read this, what does that headline say?

[Headline: "Jesus Franco: El rescate de un director de cine ignorado y maldito". from "El Tiempo" #722, March 4, 1996 - ed.]

JF - It says, "The comeback of a movie director ignorant and abandoned..."

KC - You mean "ignored" I hope...

JF - [laughs] Oh, yeah! "Ignored!" Oh, no... not "ignorant!" [laughs again] This is the beginning. They go on to say things like "wonderful director" and "nah, nah, nah..." and that I had troubles with the censorship and moved to different countries and "nah, nah, nah..." And then they talk about my relationship with Orson Welles and things. But it's all very good. And in a nice way. And this is a photo from the film. [points to photo in article] And this is the actor I have been telling you about.

KC - Santiago Segura.

JF - He's a great one, that one. A fantastic actor, Segura. He played a main part in a film called "The Day of the Beast". Have you seen this film?

KC - No. Is it a new film?

JF - Yes, it is playing here now. It is called EL DIA DE LA BESTIA.

HG - We've seen some ads for that film. We'd like to see it in its original form before we leave.

JF - It's making one of the biggest successes in the Spanish cinema now. The director is a guy called Alex de la Iglesia who's a fan of my films. He's even given me free publicity. The day before yesterday he was on tv in prime time. There was an interview with him and they asked him what his plans are now after his current success. And he said, "...to wait for the premiere of **KILLER BARBYS!**"

KC - Simple enough.

HG - Great free publicity.

JF - You have the guy who got the equivalent of the Oscar for this film, **EL DIA DE LA BESTIA** and he takes the time to say something nice about me. Very nice. Very courteous. It's a good film, "The Day of the Beast". To me it's a wonderful horror film with good production values. You should see it. [picks up newspaper and begins to thumb through theater listings] So, "A.B.C.", which is the most famous newspaper in Spain, is having an interview with me tomorrow. They had a special photo session with me and took a photo with the (Killer Barbie) dolls for their first page. It's things like that which are unbelievable.

KC - It is unbelievable but, all the same, do you find it frustrating that it has taken them so long to give you the recognition you deserve?

JF - It's frustrating, yes. But it's better now than never. [laughs] It's a little bit frustrating but Luis Bunnell said when he made **LE PHANTOM DE LIBERTE** - it was a mad film, a wonderful film but completely mad and very successful in the whole world - he said to me, "Listen, this is funny. Now I'm looking forward to so many projects, more than I ever had in my life and everybody wants to produce me - things nobody wanted to produce - and now I have so many things coming up because now nobody will tell me that they don't want my stories." But he was too old, it was too late for him. I hope it's not too late for me because when he said that he was 78 and I will be 60 next May.

KC - Excuse me? You'll be 60?

JF - Yes, so I have at least 15 years to make pictures.

KC - Hopefully, at the very, very least.

JF - In fifteen years I can make at least 100 films.

KC - At your rate, why not 15 hundred films?

JF - [laughs] No, I don't think so now. Or maybe not yet.

KC - With recognition coming at this stage of the game, did you always know that the time would come that your films would be understood and somewhat embraced?

JF - I hoped so.

KC - But you didn't know?

JF - No, I didn't know. No, no. I wouldn't have believed it just a couple of years ago.

You know, people are funny. After I finished **DON QUIXOTE** all the people looked at me and said, "We don't take his work seriously. Look at what he has done now."

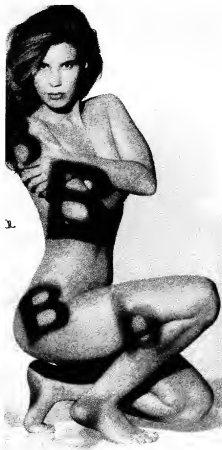
KC - Obviously not aware that you didn't have complete access to Welles' raw footage to complete the film properly... Was that the lowest point of your career?

JF - Aside from some personal tragedies... deaths of friends... you know... I think so, yes. After **DON QUIXOTE**. Working on **DON QUIXOTE** was the highest point of my career and, afterwards, the reception was the lowest. [pauses] "The rise and fall of Jess Franco," as maybe Tim Lucas will say. [hands theater listings to K.C.] Here, **EL DIA DE LA BESTIA** is playing in the theater on the big street parallel to here. This is a street called Princess. It's a very good film. It's the second film he made. At first he was a scriptwriter and then he started to direct. He made a very strange film, a mad film. [to Lima] His first one?

LR - ACCION MUTANTE.

JF - Very nice. Science fiction. And then he decided to make **EL DIA DE LA BESTIA** which is a comic strip. He's also a comic strip writer, you know. Hey, that reminds me. I can give you something. The same publisher who made those records I gave you ["Sexy Sadie" by Sexy Sadie and "Dressed to Kiss" by the Killer Barbies - ed.] publishes this. [hands K.C. a copy of "2000 Maniacos"]





Jewel Shepard - so near yet so far. The next Kali Hansa?

KC - Ah, "2000 Mamiocos". I've read this. This is one of those magazines in which you're constantly referred to as "Uncle Jess".

JF - Yes. Many years ago my nephew wrote an article about me and he called me "Tio Jess" and from that time on - I don't know exactly why - they always call me "Tio Jess" as a joke on my nephew.

KC - This particular issue has made its way around the world. It's their very popular "Scream Queens" issue.

JF - Yes, the "Chicos de miedo" - "The Girls of Fear." There is a reference to Lina in here as well as a few other actresses from my films. It is very nice. Do you know any of these American actresses? Wasn't Jewel Shepard supposed to come here with you?

KC - Yes. Unfortunately she had to drop out at the last minute. She would have loved to meet you. She's an excellent actress too. Have you seen her in CAGED HEAT 2: STRIPPED OF FREEDOM? Should be right up your alley.

JF - This is one of those prison movies? I have plans to do another one of those. [opens magazine to article on Jewel Shepard] Have you read this?

KC - I've looked at the pictures. My Spanish is non-existent.

JF - I'll read you some [begins reading to himself and then aloud] ... "My friend, Mark Evanier, a script-writer for the animated "Garfield" tv series told me, 'Jewel, all of your friends are out of work... or without a job. You are not alone. I believe if you talk to other people they will tell you the same stories.' And I got the idea like that..."

HG - She's talking about the idea of writing her book about other B-actresses.

JF - ...I see... [reads again] "The people want to pay to see the actresses get naked and the people who watch the videos just want to look at your tits!" [laughs] And why not? Does she have nice tits?

KC - [gulps and blushes] I haven't seen them myself recently. From what I can remember they were quite remarkable.

HG - No complaints.

KC - Jewel's a very nice and very attractive woman. She's a fine actress but she's had a rough time of late getting herself cast in films. But the point she's making there underlines one of the major differences between American films - American actresses - and European films and actresses. When I spoke to Lina earlier she treated sex and nudity in films in a matter of fact manner: if the role calls for it, you do it. It's one of the reasons why you were chosen for the role so you don't thicker and complain about it, you do it.

JF - Yeah.

KC - There's nothing to be ashamed about - unless you look like me - but if you are telling a story and that's what happened ...

JF - Exactly, no shame involved. You have to be faithful to what happens naturally in a story.

KC - Whereas American actresses feel they are degrading themselves by showing their body. And they have a very good point because American directors don't necessarily treat nudity as part of the story, they use it as a means to sell a film - which is a completely different thing and not entirely acceptable by artistic standards.

JF - Don't create a reason for the sex or nudity. But if it is there in the story you are not being honest if you don't show or you are being absurd if you find a ridiculous way not to show it.

KC - Sometimes the lengths to which they go to avoid show-

ing it or to highlight it only emphasis the presence of a naked body. No wonder why some actresses feel degraded.

JF - Yeah! They are feminists but, at the same time, very old-fashioned. Maybe they should find a compromise: Yes, it's a big difference between America and Europe. American directors always make sex and nudity seem nasty, dirty.

KC - It seems Americans concentrate on the five minutes of sex instead of the other 85 minutes of a movie. This puts so far emphasis on the particular scene which makes it unnecessarily salacious. On the other hand, you can do a film in which an actor or actress is naked for the full length of a film without giving it that "dirty" feel.

JF - Of course. In general the thing is that some actresses in Europe, not all, enjoy to play this kind of part. They enjoy it! They are unhappy when they are in a cabaret show and they can't do these kinds of things. Because their agents say, "No. Don't show your body anymore because you are getting very important." The actresses say, "So? What the hell if I'm very important? I have a sexy scene and I want to show that I am well built and I want to do it."

KC - That's a healthier and more honest way because people in many situations in real life happen to get undressed. It's the unrealistic way directors and actresses try to cover this up that accentuates the actual nudity, bring unnecessary attention to it. Giving it that forbidden feel. You know, in American films someone is always walking around alone in their home after leaving the shower with a towel draped around them or else they will get up out of bed when they are naked and they will pull the blankets up with them to cover themselves. This isn't natural. And such things accentuate the obscurity of the American view of sexuality in the cinema.

LR - Yeah. It's ridiculous.

JF - It's ridiculous. I think in France the way the girls think is exactly the way I was telling you. Even important actresses such as Emmanuelle Béart, they say, "if I have to be naked, okay, so what?" And ... poof! ... off come the clothes. "The story and the situation ask for it. I will not put a towel around me when I am at home in the summertime and I come out of the shower or the bathroom. I am naked. So what?" This is the mentality. It's mostly a French mentality. In Spain, even if the people don't like it, we are very much under the influence of the French show business. If you take Jeanne Moreau, even now, and say to her that she has to be naked in this sequence, she'll say it's okay. Françoise Brion is almost naked in my film *CARTAS BOCA ARRIBA*. She was asked me, "Listen, if you want, I can be completely naked, don't be silly." I said, "No. I don't want it because the film has to be for all the audiences in Spain..." - this was 1966 - "...I'm sorry, but if you are naked we'll have big trouble." But it was not a problem for the actress. In general European actresses don't care. Carole Laure! We have seen Carole Laure in two French films - the most hard sequences we have ever seen in a film which is not X-rated. It's a film... what's it called?

LR - I think it was *SWEET MOVIE*.

JF - Carole Laure has a very important part and she has a sequence which is... pfft!... I never saw such an actress of the quality or importance of Carole Laure with her legs wide open and completely naked, playing with herself. We saw the film in Paris first and then we saw it on Spanish tv! On tv! Here.

KC - That's right. You have about as much freedom on regular tv here as we do in the movie theaters.

JF - Yes. With the exception of the X-rated cinema. You know,

I can tell you now that I wanted to make a new "jail" film and it didn't happen. But I have the script written. It's in the drawer over there. I wanted to do it with all the famous American and European adult porno stars. I wanted to have girls like Tori Welles, Barbara Dure, Brigitte Lahaie, ... Ten actresses like that. And I think it would be fantastic - but not a porno film, a "jail" film, a prison film. Because girls like Tori Welles, for instance, I don't know what's happened to Tori Welles now - or what the hell she does for work - but she was able to act. She played all right. Fred Olen Ray made a prison film like that once or twice. I saw one film of Olen Ray on tv with Barbara Dure playing a part. But a very silly part. A very stupid part. Barbara Dure, I saw her in sequences where she played fantastically well. But not doing that "nah, nah, nah..." [makes silly faces] ... very badly as all the others. But she has some personality and a beautiful face. With a personality a little bit in the Sharon Stone way. Fantastic. And Tori Welles, a beautiful face. Wonderful.

KC - Besides looking forward to more boring films I suppose we can look forward to a new "women-in-prison" film from you.

JF - One, at least, yeah. Because it's the same kind, the same comic strip style. And this one I am planning is more comic strip than ever. And the guys really like it. And they like too the idea to shoot it with these kinds of actresses in it. You know, I had an agent in Hollywood. She's a very nice woman. She helped me a lot getting actors and things but when I was first planning this film I asked her about actresses like Marilyn Chambers. And she didn't know a single name of any of those girls. Not one! This agent was the casting director of "The A-Team" and she was familiar with all of these action stars but not any of these girls. I said to her, "You're not able to find a girl called Marilyn Chambers? Or another one called Tori Welles? Or another one called Barbara Dure?" And she promised me that she would ask around. And four or five days later she sent me a fax saying, "Listen, tell me how I can find these girls. I want to help you but no one knows about them." [to H.G.] You know these kinds of girls? Tori Welles for instance. Do you know how to reach her? Can you find someone like Raquel Darian?

HG - I can probably find out. I'll be happy to do it for you.

JF - Yeah! Because, you know, some of them, I'd agree with you, are completely silly. One, for instance, Traci Lords. She was silly! But a girl like Barbara Dure is not stupid. Not at all.

KC - [picks up "2000 Maniacs" again] Are you familiar with those girls we were talking about before? Linnea Quigley, Michelle Bauer, Brinke Stevens, Monique Gabrielle ...

JF - Yeah, of course. That one Gabrielle was in the Borowczyk film...

HG - EMMANUELLE 5.

JF - Yes. You know, it happened that ten or twelve years ago should have been the wonderful time for these kinds of girls. Then everything was "soft" porno. Sexy but not "hard". But now anybody can do anything they want. On tv or video they prefer the X-films because it is more free.

KC - Well, that's when these girls had their hey-days. But I guess over time the X-rated films and the freedoms on video kind of destroyed their potential livelihood.

JF - The problem with most of the X-rated films in the States, in the whole world in general, is that they are very badly done. They've become tasteless. They don't care about the



Dinner at the famous "Spanish" landmark, "Tony Roma's". (l-r) Hugh Gallagher, Antonio Mayans, Kevin Collins, Lina Romay, and Jess Franco. March 6, 1996.

lights or settings or acting or anything like that. But people like Andrew Blake, for instance, you should see Teri Welles in his films. She's very attractive and emotional. You want to take her and put her in a normal film. It's what I'd like to do next.

KC - [to J.F. and H.G.] See, now you've got a project to do together.

JF - If I can put together this film I will ask you both for your help. To try to find them. I will give you a list. Because I don't want someone stupid like this ... Weiger? ... the girl from "Penthouse" or "Playboy" ...

HG - Teri Weigel.

JF - Weigel. But she's...you know...nothing. To play a part in this film I have to find a fantastic woman from Puerto Rico. Who could play the part of the bitch of the prison. A woman about 45 years old. I was thinking of Vanessa del Rio.

KC - She was just on network television the other night, an episode of "N.Y.P.D. Blue" or "Murder One", one of those. She's on regular American television now.

JF - Okay. She's also got a wonderful personality to play this kind of part. Fantastic. Very good.

KC - Have you seen her recently?

JF - Not really.

KC - I think she got into body building.

LR - What?

JF - Ah, beautiful. [to Lina] Vanessa del Rio has tightened her abs!

LR - Ah! Perfect for the part.

JF - Yes. Perfect for the part. Okay, so we can work together on this. Is that camera still rolling?

KC - Sure, we wanted to catch every word of wisdom.

JF - Okay, my next word of wisdom is "dinner". Let's go. [And so they did - ed.]

NOTES TO THE JESS FRANCO INTERVIEW

¹ By referring to Lorys as a "popular" girl, Franco merely means that she is "of the general class" and is not inferring any moral imputendo.

² Other sources will show that Taylor's birth name is George Brown or George Brown Randall. He also acted under the name Grek Martin in his early years.

³ The Filmoteca, on Calle de Santa Isabel in Madrid, is one of the major film libraries and museums in Spain.

⁴ Coben technically appeared in two films for Franco as she also cameled as one of the vampire's brides in *EL CONDE DRACULA*.

⁵ *Caspa* is the literal Spanish translation for "dandruff".

⁶ The still in question depicts a decayed corpse whose least problem is his case of *caspa*.

⁷ "2000 Maniacos" #15, December 1994, page 48.

⁸ *Ibid.*

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